# The ARUBA, BONAIRE & CURAÇAO ALIVE GUIDE

Susan Brushaber & Arnold Greenberg

VISIT…

# Aruba, Bonaire & Curacao ALIVE

Susan Brushaber & Greenberg

HUNTER

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hunterpub@emi.net

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# The ABC Islands

For many, the Caribbean either stops at Barbados, or doesn't even reach much beyond the Bahamas or Virgin Islands. Little is known about the three leeward islands off by themselves just a few miles north of Venezuela and tucked safely below the hurricane belt. Yet Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao, the A, B, and C of the ABC Islands offer everything you could ever want from a Caribbean holiday.

The **A** stands both for Aruba and the abundance of world class restaurants, casinos, and top notch entertainment you'll enjoy there. The **B** is Bonaire, synonymous with bountiful marine life and bucolic landscapes. The **C**, Curaçao, is best known for its cosmopolitan quality and Dutch Caribbean charm.

## The Attractions

Though many have yet to discover the ABC Islands, those who have return again and again. Here are a few of the reasons why:

With nary a cloud in the sky, the islands enjoy azure skies and turquoise seas 12 months a year. Temperatures in the low 80s and a constant breeze are a given. Best of all, the ABC Islands are located outside the hurricane belt!

Getting To The ABC Islands
Boston
Newark/JFK
Baltimore
UNITED STATES
N
Atlanta
Bahama Islands
Tampa
Miami
CUBA
JAMAICA
HAITI
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
PUERTO RICO
Caribbean Sea
ARUBA
CURAÇAO
BONAIRE
Tortuga
COLOMBIA
VENEZUELA
Caracas
COSTA RICA
PANAMA
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Diving and snorkeling are the best in the Caribbean. Crystal clear waters reveal pristine reefs and fantastic wrecks. Aggressive protection programs and environmentally conscious dive shops guarantee that they'll stay that way for years to come.

Those same tradewinds that propelled the merchant ships of the Dutch West India Company now provide ideal conditions for sailing and windsurfing and keep beachgoers comfortably cool.

Active vacationers have a wealth of activities to choose from on land as well as in the water, including, golf, tennis, horseback riding, hiking and biking. Nature lovers and birdwatchers won't be disappointed.

Shopping is first-rate, especially on Aruba and Curaçao where prices for fine fragrances and designer fashions are as much as 20% less than what they are at home.

All three islands offer a variety of accommodations, from small bed and breakfasts and country inns to luxurious five star resorts. Types and prices vary by island, but affordability is better than on other islands in the Caribbean.

Dining on all three islands is first class, offering a variety of cuisines guaranteed to satisfy even the most discriminating palate.

**A**miable, **B**enevolent and **C**aring best describe the people of the ABC Islands. Warmth and hospitality are national traits.

Compared to other islands, the ABC Islands are relatively crime-free. (No matter where

*See individual islands for detailed descriptions of diving conditions and dive sites.*

you travel, however, car doors should be locked when leaving the car unattended and valuables should always be placed in the hotel safe.) Noticeably absent as well are beach vendors hawking t-shirts and souvenirs.

The Islands' unique combination of Dutch Caribbean charm and Latin warmth are irresistible!

# Getting There

## By Air

Carriers generally recognize two high seasons for travel to the ABC Islands. The first runs from late June through mid-August when vacationing families are taking advantage of reduced rates at many hotels. The second coincides with the winter months up north, and runs from mid-December to mid-April. During these periods airfare will be higher than it is at other times throughout the year. Fares may also be higher for weekend travel during the low season, though they remain constant throughout the high season.

Several carriers offer regular non-stop service to Aruba and Curaçao out of New York (JFK International), Newark, Miami, Baltimore, Tampa, Amsterdam, and Caracas. Travellers to Bonaire usually have to change planes in Curaçao or Aruba. Carriers with frequent ser-

vice to the islands are **Air Aruba** ( 1-800/882-7822); **American Airlines** ( 1-800/433-7300); and **KLM** ( 1-800/374-7747)), which flies out of Amsterdam.

**ALM**, Antillean Airlines ( 1-800/327-7230) offers frequent service between the three islands as well as two flights daily to Curaçao out of Miami. ALM flies to Aruba out of Miami on Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays, and to Bonaire on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Through its codeshare program with **United Airlines**, passengers flying on United from other U.S. cities connect in Miami with the ALM flights. The codeshare fare is valid on direct flights only and reservations must be made through United ( 1-800/241-6522).

## Via Cruise Ship

Terrific shopping, Dutch Caribbean charm and casinos have placed Willemstad and Oranjestad among the most popular ports of call for cruise ships serving the Caribbean. Kralendijk is increasingly being included in many itineraries as well. Lines calling on one or more of the ABC islands include Celebrity Cruises, Crystal Cruises, Costa Cruise Lines, Norwegian Cruise Lines, and the Cunard Line. For more information contact your travel agent. Agents that specialize in cruising are becoming increasingly common.

### Inter-Island Travel

A vacation on one island can easily be combined with a day trip or overnight to at least one of the others. Though several tour operators offer day trips between the islands, you should be able to do it on your own with some advance planning. ALM and Air Aruba offer several daily flights among the three islands. Airline reservations will generally have to be made in advance, with the amount of notice dependent on the time of year you're visiting. Car rentals should be arranged prior to your arrival.

An attractive alternative to flying is to travel with one of the regularly organized sailboat trips, or to get together with a group of friends and charter your own. See the sections on sailing in each chapter for details.

## Getting Ready

### Entry Requirements

To pass through customs, visitors to Aruba, Bonaire or Curaçao must present proof of identity and a return or continuing ticket. Residents of the United States or Canada may present either a valid passport, an official birth certificate with a raised seal along with a photo I.D., or a certificate of naturalization. Non-U.S. or Canadian citizens who are legal residents of either country must

present a re-entry permit, a valid non-quota immigration visa or an Alien Registration Card. Citizens of other nationalities must present a valid passport and visa if necessary.

## Money Matters - Currency

The currency on Bonaire and Curaçao is the Netherlands Antilles Florin (NAFL), which is also referred to as a guilder. The currency on Aruba is the Aruban Florin. Extremely stable, both the Aruban and Netherlands Antilles florins are backed by gold and foreign exchange, and they fluctuate with the dollar on the world market. At press time the exchange rate was 1.77 florins (NAFL or AFL) to $1 U.S., as it has been for some time. U.S. dollars are widely accepted on all three islands, as are travelers checks and all major credit cards. Personal checks, however, are not.

The exchange rate with the Canadian dollar is 1.51 NAFl. to $1 Canadian. Banks will exchange other currencies for a fee. Note that banks may also charge a fee to cash travelers checks, while restaurants, shops and hotels do not.

## Accommodations

You'll find a fine assortment of hotels on the ABC Islands, with modern, luxury resorts most prevalent on Aruba. On Curaçao there are many older resorts built in the 1950's and 1960's, some of which have been refurbished, along with newer accommodations and small inns in the countryside. Accommodations on Bonaire cater to divers, and they feature multi-bedroom apartment-style suites with fully equipped kitchens.

Our price scale is designed to give you a ballpark figure for planning. It is based on the price of a double room during high season, which generally runs from mid-December to mid-April, though exact dates will vary by hotel. The greatest fluctuation between low and high season rates is on Aruba. Overall, accommodations on Aruba are more expensive than those on Curaçao and Bonaire, with far more hotels falling into the expensive range.

Considerable savings may be had by taking advantage of special packages, such as those for honeymooners, divers and families. You may also do better by reserving with the hotel directly rather than through a reservation service or travel agent, especially if you're planning to visit during low season.

Breakfast and meals are generally not included in the rate, though most hotels do offer separate meal plans. A government tax, which varies by island, is levied on the room rate and a 10 to 15% service charge will be added to the rate as well.

All hotels described take major credit cards unless specifically noted.

### Alive Hotel Price Scale

| | |
|---|---|
| Deluxe | $250+ |
| Expensive | $150-$250 |
| Moderate | $100-$150 |
| Inexpensive | Under $100 |

## Restaurants

Our price scale is based on a three-course dinner (per person): appetizer or soup, main dish, dessert and coffee. Cocktails and wine are extra. Please keep in mind that these are ballpark figures. Prices among different appetizers and main courses obviously vary considerably. The final cost of your meal is dependent on your selections.

A 10-15% service charge will be added to your bill. If not, a 10-20% tip, according to the quality of the service you received, is appropriate. Keep in mind that the service charge does not go directly to your waitperson but is also used to cover restaurant costs. Whether or not to give an additional tip is at your discretion.

Though most restaurants accept major credit cards, many of the smaller, local restaurants may not. If that's a concern, phone ahead or ask when making your reservation.

### Alive Restaurant Price Scale

| | |
|---|---|
| Expensive | $35+ pp |
| Moderate | $25+ |
| Inexpensive | under $25 |

## Customs Regulations

Since you may be planning to take advantage of the great shopping on Aruba and/or Curaçao, a review of customs regulations may be helpful.

U.S. Customs regulations provide a $600 exemption for articles based on their retail value in the place of acquisition. A flat 10% rate of duty is assessed on the next $400 worth of merchandise, provided it is not intended for retail sale. This provision may be used once every 30 days, commencing the day after your last arrival. A traveler is permitted to mail an unlimited number of gifts valued at $25 or less to friends and relatives in the United States, as long as no person receives more than one gift per day. Members of a family traveling together can combine their purchases and exemptions.

The duty-free allowance for liquor if you are over 21 years of age is one fifth plus a second bottle of locally produced liquor. Original works of art, including gold and silver jewelry made in the Netherlands Antilles and local handicrafts and souvenirs, can be brought home duty-free.

## Packing to Go

What you pack depends on the type of vacationing you have in mind. Dive equipment, tennis racquets and golf clubs can be rented if you prefer not to lug your equipment with you. Dress is casual, especially on Bonaire where shorts and t-shirts are standard during the day. Casual resort wear is best for evenings, though, especially if you plan on dining in town.

If you've made dinner plans at one of the finer restaurants on Aruba or Curaçao, men should wear trousers, a collared shirt and en-

closed footwear. Men might also pack a sports jacket just in case. Women can wear anything casually chic. Nightclubs usually require that men wear trousers and may refuse to allow you in if you're wearing shorts.

### Packing Tips

To prevent suits and dresses from wrinkling in your suitcase, place tissue paper between garments.

Transparent zippered plastic bags, sold at five-and-dime stores, are ideal for carrying lingerie, cosmetics and shoes.

Carry all liquids, shampoos, lotions and the like in plastic bottles. In case of leakage, it's often a good idea to put them in plastic bags as well.

Don't feel you have to pack an entirely new outfit for every day of your vacation. Hotel laundry service is usually fast and efficient.

Over-the-counter drugs and sundries are readily available. Even if they cost a little more, lighter luggage may be worth it. Do bring enough prescription drugs to last your entire trip.

## Climate

Thankfully located below the hurricane belt, the ABC Islands are year-round destinations. Temperatures are in the low 80s all year long, with a constant breeze provided by the tradewinds. The average rainfall is less than 24 inches a year, falling mostly in brief show-

ers. November and December are the rainiest months.

## Electric Current

The electric current on Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao is compatible with small appliances such as electric razors and hairdryers intended for use in the United States. You may need adaptors in some cases. If this is a concern, ask ahead of time.

## Language

The ABC islander's amazing aptitude for language is sure to astonish you. Though the official language is Dutch, the native language is Papiamentu, which is spoken nowhere else. Most residents also speak Spanish and English. Virtually all persons employed in hotels, restaurants and shops speak English and Dutch flawlessly, as well as Spanish. You'll be amazed at how effortlessly they alternate among the four languages. It's not unusual for a busy shopkeeper to speak to four different patrons in four different languages, simultaneously!

Papiamentu first came into being as the language used among the slaves during the passage from West Africa to the Antilles; then it became the everyday language spoken among the different racial and national groups living in Otrobanda, a district of Curaçao's capital, Willemstad. It's not surprising that many words in Papiamentu are strikingly similar to Spanish, Dutch, Portuguese, English and

French, with some African influences as well. Until recently it had been more of a spoken than a written language, with Dutch the language of instruction in schools. An official spelling has been developed and Papiamentu is now taught in schools along with Spanish and English. However, as you become familiar with the language you will notice that several words have muliple spellings, with 'c' and 'k' used interchangably (*cunucu* and *kunuku*). The same is true of 'ñ' and 'nj' (*saliña* and *salinja).*

*A few words in Papiamentu*

| | |
|---|---|
| Bon Bini | Welcome |
| Kon ta bai? | How do you do? |
| Mi ta bon, danki | I am fine thank you. |
| Pasa un bon dia! | Have a nice day! |
| Bon dia | Good morning |
| Bon tardi | Good afternoon |
| Bon nochi | Good evening |
| Ayo | Good bye |
| Bon Bon | Very good |
| Dushi | Dear/Sweet |

## Time Zone

Atlantic Standard Time, which is one hour ahead of Eastern Standard Time, is in effect all year long.

## Newspapers/Broadcast Media

Both Curaçao and Aruba have English language dailies that feature international and local news. These are also available on Bonaire. Select stores and larger hotels carry

*The New York Times, USA Today* and *The Wall Street Journal*, although they may be a couple of days old. There are radio broadcasts of the news in English and Dutch on all three islands. Hotels on Aruba and Curaçao, and several hotels on Bonaire have satellite television and carry CNN and other English language programming as well as stations from Venezuela.

### Telephone

Direct dialing to the United States and Europe is possible from all major hotels. AT&T's USA Direct Service is available.

## A Capsule History

The earliest known inhabitants of the ABC Islands were the Caquetio Indians, a Caribbean faction of the peace-loving Arawak Nation. The Caquetios were not warriors but fishermen who traveled by dugout canoe to trade with their fellow tribes on neighboring islands. They probably settled on the ABC Islands hoping that they had found a safe haven from the fearless Caribs, who were more prevalent in the northern islands. Cannibals and warriors, the Caribs were a belligerent people, who at one point had even driven Columbus off the island of St. Croix.

While Columbus was busy discovering new territories in the northern Caribbean, his lieutenant Alonso de Ojeda headed south. Many believe Ojeda was the first to discover Curaçao in 1499, before going on to discover Aruba from the shores of the Cape Roman

Peninsula in Venezuela. Amazed by the size of the Indians living on the islands, Ojeda nicknamed the islands "Islas de los Gigantes," the Islands of Giants.

However it is the Italian navigator Amerigo Vespucci who is officially credited with the discovery of Bonaire and Curaçao in 1499. Not finding gold on any of the islands, the Spaniards characterized them as "*islas inutiles*" or worthless islands. Rather than leave empty-handed, in 1513 they transported most of the Caquetios to Santo Domingo to work as slaves in the copper mines. Eventually, the Spanish returned to Aruba and Curaçao, setting up cattle ranches to be tended by the Indians they had brought back from Santo Domingo. The ranches never prospered.

Despite the rampant activities of marauding pirates and British buccaneers throughout the rest of the Caribbean, life on the ABC Islands was uneventful until 1634. In that year the Dutch easily conquered Curaçao, and in 1636 they occupied Aruba and Bonaire as well. Throughout the next 150 years or so, attention was to be focused on Curaçao, while Bonaire and Aruba stayed quietly out of the way.

The Dutch West India Company recognized the strategic value of Curaçao's natural harbor, both as a military strongpoint in its ongoing battles against the Spanish and as a commercial harbor set amidst its trading routes and possessions in the New Nether-

lands and Brazil. Curaçao soon became an important depot for slaves brought from Africa to work on plantations throughout the Caribbean, as well as for South American and Caribbean products bound for Europe, just as it is today.

## The Islands Today

The abolition of slavery in 1863 all but devastated the islands' economies, forcing many residents to seek employment elsewhere. Prosperity returned in 1915 with the arrival of the Royal Dutch Shell refinery on Curaçao. Shell became the largest employer on the island, attracting workers from Bonaire and other islands as well. Aruba followed suit nine years later in 1924 with the opening of the Lago Refinery by the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey (Exxon). The boom years lasted until 1985, when a declining oil market forced both Shell and Exxon to close their refineries.

Luckily for both islands, the days when they were entirely dependent on oil for their livelihood are long gone. Aruba has focused its energies on tourism and is now one of the most popular destinations in the Caribbean. Returning to its roots, Curaçao is quickly becoming both a commercial powerhouse and a vacation paradise.

More low key than its sister islands, until recently Bonaire has stayed more or less out of the spotlight. Since many Bonaireans had looked to the refineries on Curaçao and Aruba

for employment, economically Bonaire was strongly linked to the other islands. Nowadays, with the growing popularity of diving, birdwatching and ecotourism, Bonaire is holding its own.

## Island Government

In 1954 the Netherlands Antilles, Surinam and Holland issued a proclamation promising to cooperate as equal, though independent, partners within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. No longer colonies, the Antilles became an autonomous entity within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, responsible for their own internal/inter-island affairs. Defense, citizenship and foreign affairs still fall under the jurisdiction of the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. which does not involve itself in the internal affairs of the partners. The capital of the Antilles is in Willemstad, Curaçao. Surinam left the Kingdom in 1975. Aruba seceded from the Netherlands Antilles in 1986 and is now an independent partner within the Kingdom.

*At that time the islands of the Netherlands Antilles were Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao, St. Maarten, St. Eustatius and Saba.*

Holland's monarch, Queen Beatrix, is at the head of the Kingdom. She appoints governors to serve as her representatives on Aruba and in the Netherlands Antilles for a term of six years. The role of the governor is entirely independent of the local governing body. The Governor of the Antilles resides in Willemstad. Ministers from Holland, the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba serve on the Council of Ministers, which handles matters

concerning foreign affairs, national security and Dutch nationality.

Its constitution is based on Western democratic principles and the government of the Netherlands Antilles has its seat in Willemstad, Curaçao. Legislative, executive and judicial powers are established according to the standard guidelines of parliamentary democracy. The 22 members of Parliament are apportioned among the four islands and elected by popular vote. The majority parties are then asked by the government to form a seven-member Council of Ministers, headed by the Prime Minister, wherein lie the executive powers. Judicial powers rest within the common courts of Aruba and the Netherlands Antilles. The highest court is the Court of Justice in the Hague.

Though independent of Bonaire and Curaçao, Aruba's political status within the Netherlands is that of a commonwealth. Free to determine domestic policy, her cultural, political and defensive links to Holland and her sister islands are still strong.

## The People

The ABC islanders are descendents of the African slaves, Arawak and other native Caribbean peoples, and the Dutch and Spanish settlers. Their mixed ancestry is a reflection of the islands' history. Forty to 50 different nationalities are represented on Aruba and Curaçao, most of whom were or are the descendents of laborers who came from neighboring islands as well as other Dutch

colonies and countries around the world to work in the oil refineries. An increasing number of Hollanders are retiring on the islands.

## Antillean Cuisine

Not only is the multi-ethnic heritage of the ABC Islands reflected in the faces of their residents, but also in the local cuisine. If you've already leafed through the dining sections pertaining to each island, you've undoubtedly noticed the many international cuisines represented on the list of island restaurants. French, Italian and Continental are familiar to everyone, but authentic Antillean cuisine is not something you're likely to find in your hometown. The cuisine of the Antilles is as rich and flavorful as their history. Sampling the local *krioyo* cooking is one of the best ways to experience the local culture. The earliest inhabitants of the Antilles, the Arawak Indians were skilled farmers, cultivating potatoes, peanuts and peppers just as they had in their native South America. In addition, they gathered avocado, pineapple, papaya, guava and the shimaruku – the West Indian cherry – which they found growing naturally on several of their new island homes. Flavor was added by seasoning foods with many of the plants they found growing wild, including oregano and basil. They cooked the red buds of the annato in oil to produce a food coloring, which was then added to whatever they were cooking. The Arawaks employed various cooking methods: boiling and steaming; roasting food barbecue-style; or baking on a *comal,* a griddle made of clay.

The Spanish, who settled on the island in the 16th century, began to use many of the native foods in their own cooking and introduced their Arawak slaves to pork and the use of pig lard. They taught the Indians to cook with sugar instead of honey and introduced them to salt, mango, citron and olives from Asia.

Soon African slaves were brought to the islands, and with them came the plantain, which is now served with most meals. It is usually fried, though sometimes boiled. The slaves also introduced *fungee*, a porridge originally made from sorghum flour. Sorghum is a tropical cereal grass still grown on Bonaire. The Arawaks began to make their own version of this porridge from cornmeal and today it is a staple of the Antillean diet known as *funchi*. Just as now, funchi was cooked in an iron pot brought from Africa and constantly stirred using a *lele*, a three-pointed wooden stirrer, or a *palu di funchi*, a wooden paddle.

The Dutch colonists, who arrived in the 17th century, contributed cheese, bacon and beans to the island diet. During the same time, Sephardic Jews fleeing the Inquisition were granted permission by the Dutch to settle in Curaçao. The most affluent among them added a touch of refinement to the Antillean kitchen, often combining sweet and sour flavorings by using capers, raisins, dried prunes, olives and piccalilli in one dish.

With the arrival of the oil refineries in the early 20th century came Dutch laborers, who introduced sandwiches made with cold meats

and cheeses, and canned vegetables. During this period, potatoes also acquired a renewed importance in the island diet. A brand new dimension was added to the local cuisine when Dutch personnel from Indonesia were stationed on Curaçao during World War II. Exotic sounding dishes such as *nassi-goreng, bahmi, sate, lumpia,* and *rendang* became commonplace on many island menus.

Dishes which you are likely to find at restaurants featuring local *krioyo* cuisine include:

*Stoba di cabrito* - goat stew

*Sopi di yuana* - iguana soup

*Moro* - rice and bean.

*Banana hasa* - fried plantains

S*opi piska* - fish soup.

*Keshi yena* - stuffed edam cheese (Dutch)

Z*arzuela* - seafood stew (Spanish influence)

*Quesilla* - baked custard with a caramel sauce

*Kadushi* - a hearty soup made from the cactus of the same name; the inner meat is prepared with fish, meat, vegetables and herbs.

Fish dishes feature: *mula* (kingfish), *mero* (sea bass), and *dradu* (king dolphin), served with a squeeze of *lamunchi* (lime) or *salsa pika* (hot sauce).

Antillean-style fast foods are usually served at road-side stalls known as *truk 'i pan* or take-out restaurants. They include *pastechi*, a pastry usually filled with meat, shrimp or

fish, and *empanas,* corn meal crescents filled with meat.

## Flora

Though you will probably be expecting to see the distinctive divi-divi tree, sculpted by the trade winds with all its branches bent west, your first impression of the ABC Islands will be the desert-like landscape of cacti and dry brush along the runway. With just over 20 inches of rainfall annually, the climate of the ABC Islands has more in common with the American Southwest than with other islands in the Caribbean. The palms gracing the beaches of Aruba and the Sea Aquarium Beach on Curaçao are not native to these islands.

Over a dozen different types of cactus thrive in the desert-like conditions common to all three islands. Most have lovely flowers, which add color to the otherwise arid landscape. Several varieties are prized by the locals for the healing qualities of their flesh when used as a salve or compress for an aching back. Others, such as the prickly pear and ground-hugging mountain melon or *melon di seru,* offer a sweet, edible fruit.

Hardest to miss are the candlestick or pillar cacti, of which the most common are the yatu (or datu) and the kadushi. The taller of the two, the tree-like kadushi branches out a few feet above the ground, and its stem is often covered in white, pink and pale green flowers. It is prized for its flesh, which is the main in-

gredient in a popular soup of the same name, and it is also used both for medicinal purposes and as a shampoo. The yatu grows straight up and down, branching out close to the ground, with white, pink or cream colored flowers blooming at the tops of its stems. Quick to take root, yatus are often cut and replanted in rows to form fences designed to keep hungry goats from trampling the garden.
Also common to the islands are fields of aloe, which was once actively cultivated for export during the 18th and 19th centuries. Though no longer cultivated, the survival of the aloe is guaranteed by the bananaquits, blue-tailed emeralds and ruby topaz hummingbirds who, after drinking the nectar of its blossoms, scatter its seeds about the countryside.

Despite their arid climate the islands do not lack for trees. In the northern reaches of Bonaire and Curaçao, you'll find dense wooded areas of low-lying mesquite trees, palo de silla, a local hardwood tree used to make kitchen utensils, and brasilwoods. In fact, it was the brilliant yellow flowers of the brasilwood that first attracted the Spanish to Bonaire. Also common to the islands is the kibra hasha. Considered one of the most beautiful trees in the Caribbean, its branches overflow with bright yellow blossoms after even the slightest rain.

Unfortunately, not all of the trees on the ABC islands are so benevolent. Beware of the machineel or manzanilla trees that grow along the beaches in several areas, Do not touch the tree nor its green, apple-like fruit;

and never sit underneath them during a rainstorm. Not only the fruit but the tree itself has such a high acidic content that a mere touch can cause a painful burn.
In gardens across the islands you'll find colorful hibiscus and the brilliant red blossoms of the expansive flamboyant tree. Just as popular is the bougainvillea, which was named for the French sea adventurer who brought them to the Caribbean from Brazil in the 18th century. Locally, bougainvillea is called trinitaria, and it comes in shades of purple, white, red, and orange. Oleander graces many a garden. The goats, knowing it's poisonous, wisely stay away. Orchids are protected in Curaçao and Christoffel Park is home to at least four types of wild orchids, including the lovely purple banana shimaron.

After a rain, tiny wildflowers will bloom along the roadside, lasting for only a few days. No matter how lovely they may look, don't get too close. Many wildflowers are protected by thorns or, like poison ivy in North America, may cause a painful rash when touched. You may see the tiny yellow blossoms of the anglo, or angel plant creeping along the ground. Not as well-intentioned as its name suggests, its blossoms die off and are replaced by painfully sharp thorns.

Don't be deceived by the equally innocent looking purple blossoms of the palu di lechi or rubbervine. In its quest for territory, it wraps its vines around other plants, thus strangling them to death. It was originally brought to Curaçao with hopes of producing rubber from

the milky substance in its stem. Efforts failed and, to the chagrin of its keepers, the palu di leche began growing out of control across the island.
After a heavy downpour the shimaruku or West Indian cherry, a small bush, practically explodes with orange-red flowers, which will ripen into a vermillion fruit as sweet as honey and rich in vitamin C.

Venturing out to the coast, you may see small white flowers blooming on the dunes. They are seaside lavender. The yellow blossoms are suriana maritima. Also common is samphire, which has blue, white and yellow flowers. Sea grapes grow wild on the dunes of Aruba's north coast.

## Fauna

Both avid birdwatchers and non-birdwatchers visiting Bonaire are sure to visit the flamingo sanctuary at Pekelmeer. Sandpipers and black-winged stilts, along with several different types of ducks, and an occasional Bahamas pintail, often join the flamingos there and at other popular feeding grounds. Shore and water birds common to the ABC Islands include pelicans, snowy egrets, red egrets, osprey, cormorants, plovers, brown boobies and various types of heron, including the yellow-crowned night heron.

Aruba proudly boasts one of only three breeding grounds for terns in the world. It is located beyond the beaches of San Nicolas. Aruba is also a rest stop for migratory birds

flying between the Americas. They include barn swallows, boboblinks, black skimmers and whistling ducks. Following the example of those who came to vacation on the island and never left, the quail and white tailed hawk are now common to Aruba. One of the island's most protected species is the rare burrowing owl.

Like Aruba, Bonaire has its share of less common birds. The black whiskered vireo, the pearly eyed thrasher and the yellow oriole are frequently sighted at Put Bronswinkel in Washington-Slagbaai National Park. Scaly-naped pigeons, bare-eyed pigeons, the eared dove and the white fronted dove also nest on Bonaire. Parakeets and the yellow-winged parrot or *lora*, which is found only on Bonaire, have been legally protected since 1931. Unfortunately, they frequently fall prey to smugglers, who take them to Aruba and Curaçao where they are sold as pets.

Bananaquits, blue-tailed emeralds, ruby topaz hummingbirds, tropical mockingbirds, trupials, black-faced grassquits, yellow warblers and several different varieties of flycatchers are among the most common varieties found on all three islands.

If you venture out to the less traveled sections of the coastline you may come across iguanas, sometimes as large as three to four feet long, sunning themselves on the cliffs. Get too close and they'll disappear, possibly by jumping into the sea. And with good reason. Although protected by law, iguanas often fall victim to

poachers. Their meat is considered a delicacy among the Antillean people, who believe it to be especially good for virility. The less timid whiptail lizard is found only on Bonaire. Males, with their blue head and greenish blue hindfeet and tail root, are easily distinguished from the more sedately colored females and young whiptails.

Be on the lookout for goats and donkeys as you travel through the countryside or *cunucu*, as it is referred to on the islands. Since their meat is a staple of the island diet, the goats are certain to belong to someone. Though some are domestic, donkeys have been running wild since 1925, when their exportation to Barbados and Trinidad was discontinued. If visiting Christoffel Park in Curaçao, watch for the rare Curaçao white-tailed deer.

## Marine Life

If there is a separate heaven for divers and snorkelers, the reefs and wrecks off the ABC Islands are "heaven on earth." Bonaire and Curaçao share the most pristine reef system in the Caribbean, home to over 200 different species of fish, 30 varieties of soft corals, and 50 species of hard corals. Both islands have designated all or much of their surrounding waters as national parks. Wreck divers will be in their element on Aruba, where several noteworthy wrecks are to be found just minutes from shore, including the *Antilla*, the largest wreck in the Caribbean.

Visibility ranges from 60 to 150 feet, revealing a fascinating landscape of corals, sponges, sea fans, and gorgonians, populated by colorful tropical fish, sea turtles, crabs, anemones and other sea creatures. The better part of many dives is within 75 feet of the surface, making this undersea world just as accessible to novice divers and snorkelers as it is to experienced divers.

Elkhorn and staghorn corals dominate the shallow plateaus before the drop-off, often followed by sloping walls covered with purple tube sponges, anemones, giant elephant ear sponges and iridescent vase sponges. While lizardfish, flamingo tongue snails and fingerprint cowries feed on the soft corals and gorgonians, moray eels, squirrel fish and blackbar soldierfish glide in and out of the crevices, often resting on the ledges, which serve as cleaning stations manned by banded coral shrimp and arrowhead crabs. French and queen angelfish, parrotfish, rock beauties, horse-eye jacks, yellow snappers and countless other tropical fish in all shapes, sizes and colors swim amidst labyrinths of soft coral, gorgonians, enormous brain corals, mustard hill corals, finger corals and mountainous star corals.

## What To Watch Out For

While the marine world is beautiful, it is not without hazards. Following the basic rule of "look but never touch" should keep you out of harm's way.

While in the shallow waters, be on the alert for **fire coral**. It causes painful and often infectious welts on contact. In fact all contact with coral is to be avoided. Not only will you damage it, but skin abrasions caused by coral run a high risk of infection due to the many microorganisms that live on it.

Heed the warning of the **do not touch me sponge**. The benign appearance of this brown sponge is deceiving. It is covered with millions of tiny razor sharp needles. They will cause a burning itch that can last for several days.

The **scorpionfish** sports dangerous poisonous spines on its lateral fins. Since it spends much of its time resting on the sandy bottom, it is easily mistaken for a piece of algae-covered coral. However, a close look may reveal a fin or its eyes on the top of its head.

Don't be deceived by the delicate appearance of the **damselfish**. Many of the 12 varieties of this dainty-looking fish are extremely territorial. They feed on algae and have their own algae patches, of which they are very protective, literally chasing other, even larger, fish away. Damsels have even been known to nip at intruding divers.

## Recommended Diving & Snorkeling Guides

*The Diving and Snorkeling Guide to Bonaire* by Jerry Schnabel and Susan L. Swygert, and *The Diving and Snorkeling Guide to Curaçao* by George S. Lewbel, Ph.D. offer detailed de-

scriptions of dive conditions and major sites. Both can be ordered from the Complete Traveller Bookstore, 212/685-9007 or write: The Complete Traveller Bookstore, 199 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016.

# Aruba

If the thought of Aruba conjures up images of the palm-lined, sandy white beaches featured in Caribbean travel brochures, glitzy casinos and great shopping, you're not alone. Most first-time visitors to Aruba are attracted to the island for just those reasons. Sunny skies, cool breezes, and water temperatures averaging a fabulous 80° are ideal for the beach. They're just as ideal for diving, snorkeling, and windsurfing, all of which can be done from that very same beach.

Whether you stay at one of Aruba's in-town hotels or along the beach, you will be within easy walking distance of world-class dining, casinos and Las Vegas-style entertainment, along with great dance clubs, pubs and outdoor cafés. Travel between the lovely capital, Oranjestad, home to many of the finest shops in the Caribbean, and the beachfront hotels is just a short cab or bus ride away. Those who venture further afield will be aptly rewarded with championship golf at a course designed by Robert Trent Jones Jr., mysterious Indian caves, terrific diving, including the largest wreck in the Caribbean, and panoramic vistas of the island's rugged north coast.

Best of all, despite the fact that Aruba is one of the fastest growing destinations in the Caribbean, her Dutch-Caribbean charm promises to remain intact.

## Island History

Although no written account exists, most assume that Alonso de Ojeda discovered Aruba in 1499 after leaving Curaçao in August and landing on Cape San Roman in Venezuela. It was from the shores of San Roman that he first set eyes on the then unknown island. Ojeda claimed Aruba for Spain, possibly without ever landing there.

At the time of its discovery, Aruba was inhabited by the peaceful Caquetio Indians of the Arawak tribe, who had been living there since the Stone Age. It is believed that the Caquetios, tired of living under the constant threat of attack by the more belligerent Carib Indians, immigrated to Aruba from the peninsula of Paraguaná in Venezuela. Today many of Aruba's towns, hills, coves, and caves still bear the names of the earliest Indian chiefs and warrior settlers, including Turibana, Guadirikiri, Camacuri, Andicuri, and Bushiri. Remnants of the Caquetio's fine craftsmanship and artistry still exist in cave paintings on Aruba's north coast and in the decorative motifs on shards of clay pottery which have been collected around the island. Unfortunately, with the arrival of the Spanish came the end of the Caquetio's quiet existence on Aruba. The conquistadors shipped them to Hispaniola to work in the gold mines as replacements for the island's native population, which had been exterminated by the Spanish.

Eleven years after its discovery, the Spanish turned Aruba into a large horse and cattle

ranch. Some of the Indians who had been shipped to Hispaniola were brought back to work the ranch.

*An alternate theory suggests that the Indians were brought back to Aruba by Juan de Ampues to help protect the Spanish Main along the Venezuelan coast.*

The ranch never prospered. In the mid-1630's Peter Stuyvesant, as Director of Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao and the Rotterdam-based Dutch West India Company, conquered Aruba. As part of the spoils, he collected horses to use in raids against the Spanish on the Venezuelan coast and as payment for the damages caused by the Spanish in Bonaire during the 80-year war for control of the three islands.

However, due to difficulties in maintaining regular communications with Curaçao, Aruba was left to her own devices, as was nearby Bonaire. Dutch military personnel maintained order on the island, but the Indians remained free. The Dutch West India Company began granting permission to a carefully selected few to settle and engage in commerce on Aruba. Oranjestad, named after Holland's reigning Royal House of Oranje, was founded during this period. With the weakening authority of the Dutch West India Company in the late 1700's, Europeans began immigrating to Aruba to settle permanently. Most were merchants from Curaçao. They were joined in the next century by Venezuelans who were fleeing the revolutions and counter-revolutions in that country. There was a short period of English rule lasting from 1805 to 1816.

*The first foreigner to settle in Aruba was Moses Van Salomon Levi Maduro.*

*The remains of the smelting works can be visited during a tour of the island. See page 106 and 109 for*

However, while commerce on Curaçao was booming, Aruba's economy was quiet. For several years Aruba's main export was horses, primarily to Cuba and Jamaica. In 1824 the discovery of alluvial gold at Rooi Fluit on the northern coast marked the beginning of Aruba's gold rush years. Smelting works were set up in Bushiribana and Balashi. Though the amount of gold mined on Aruba would pale in comparison to other mines around the world and the smelting works were eventually abandoned, gold's discovery provided the needed spark to the island's economy. For the next 100 years, gold, phosphate, cochineal, the pods of the divi-divi used to make tannin for leather tanning, and aloe would be major exports. Thankfully, once the supply of gold dried up, aloe was there to replace it. In the 1920's Aruban aloe represented 70% of the world's aloe production and produced an annual income of $1 million, an enormous sum in the 1920's. Most of Aruba's aloe was shipped to England.

*The refinery had an output of 440,000 barrels a day.*

Real prosperity came to Aruba in 1924 when the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey (Exxon) ended its search for a good seaport and stable government at the then sleepy village of San Nicolas, where it established a refinery to process oil from the Lake Maracaibo oil fields of Venezuela. Its Lago Refinery quickly became the world's largest and the island's primary source of livelihood. San Nicolas was transformed into a booming oil town. So dependent was the island on the refinery that its main thoroughfare, L.G. Smith Boulevard, was named for Lago's general

manager. English gained prominence as a second language due to the large numbers of Americans who came to Aruba with the refinery.

*In 1991 the refinery was reopened by the Coastal Oil Refining Company out of Texas.*

The proverbial bottom fell out of Aruba's economy on March 31, 1985 when, due to reduced demand worldwide and refining overcapacity, the refinery was closed. Unemployment skyrocketed and Aruba's economy was facing a downward spiral.

Rather than give up, Aruba focused on its then secondary industry, tourism. Aruba's first tourists arrived aboard the *Tradewind* in 1957, the first cruise ship to dock in Oranjestad. It was soon followed by the Aruba Caribbean Hotel and Casino, which opened in 1959 and is now the Radisson. Tourism really began to develop in the mid-60's. To prevent the haphazard development that can spoil the beauty of an island as small as Aruba, turning it into little more than a beach with a string of highrise hotels, the government has implemented a carefully planned development program that emphasizes the preservation of Aruba's beautiful beaches and waters.

## The Origins of "Aruba"

*The Spanish obviously didn't look hard enough. Gold was discovered on Aruba in 1834.*

Scholars have traced the origins of the word Aruba to the language of the Carib Indians, finding its roots in the words *oruba* or "well-placed" and in *ora* and *oubao*, which mean "shell." Another theory attributes the name to the Spanish conquistadors who, finding gold, referred to the island as *oro hubo* or

"there was gold." This last option seems the least likely. When they first discovered Aruba, the Spanish considered it, along with Bonaire and Curaçao, as one of the *islas inutiles,* "worthless islands," since it appeared to lack the precious metals they were searching for.

## The Government

On January 1, 1986 Aruba seceded from the Netherlands Antilles to become a separate entity within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, now comprised of the Netherlands Antilles, Holland and Aruba. Not a surprise, Aruba's separate status had been unanimously agreed to in March 1983 at a Round Table Conference of the partners within the Dutch Kingdom.

No longer managed by the Central Government of the Netherlands Antilles, Aruba enjoys direct contact with Holland and manages those internal affairs formerly managed by the Central Government. This includes aviation, customs, immigration, communications and other internal matters. Aruba's governor is appointed by the Queen of Holland for a six-year term to act as her representative. The role of the governor is entirely independent of the local governing body. Aruba's government is modeled after the central government of the Netherlands Antilles.

Though independent of Bonaire and Curaçao, Aruba's political status within the Netherlands is that of a commonwealth. Free to de-

termine domestic policy, her cultural, political and defensive links to Holland and her sister islands are still strong.

## The People

Aruba's national anthem captures the friendly nature of the island's more than 81,500 inhabitants with the line "Grandeza di bo pueblo ta su gran cordialidad" – "The greatness of our people is their great cordiality." Arubans are most often described as pleasant-natured, hardworking and well-educated. Their natural warmth and hospitality have even been recognized as national traits.

Forty nationalities live peacefully on this small island within an area of only 70 square miles. The truly native Aruban is of mixed Dutch, Spanish and Arawak Indian ancestry. While Dutch is the official language, its usage is eclipsed by Papiamentu, which is spoken in the home, among friends and often in business. English and Spanish are taught in school.

## Festivals & Holidays

There are so many special events, tournaments and festivals on Aruba that your stay is almost guaranteed to coincide with something. Music and dance festivals, theater festivals, cultural expositions and sporting competitions are held at various times throughout the year.

## Annual Events

**The Bon Bini Festival:** Fort Zoutman hosts this weekly festival of Aruban arts and crafts, folkloric music and dance, and local foods on Tuesday evenings from 6:30 to 8:30 pm.

**Carnival:** Arubans spend the year preparing for this week of non-stop merrymaking, which comes to a close at midnight just before Ash Wednesday. See below for details.

**One Cool Summer:** From May through October, Aruba is filled with weekly street festivals, cultural events, outdoor concerts and friendly sporting competitions.

**Aruba Hi-Winds Windsurfing Pro-Am Grand Prix World Cup Event:** Every June windsurfers from around the world converge on Aruba to compete in this week-long competition.

**Deep-Sea Fishing Tournaments:** Throughout the month of October boats from Aruba, Curaçao, Florida and Venezuela compete in a series of tournaments hosted by the Aruba Nautical Club. For further information, contact Mr. Arend van Unen or Mr. Jossy Hunt of the Nautical Club, Barcadera Z/N ( 53022).

**Catamaran Regatta**: Every November since 1991 catamarans from Europe, Venezuela and the United States have been competing in this colorful week-long event held on Palm Beach.

For more information concerning these and other events held on Aruba, contact the Aruba Tourism Authority.

## National Holidays

Banks, the post office and government offices will be closed on these days. Many shops and restaurants may also close.

| | |
|---|---|
| New Years Day<br>January 1 | |
| G.F. Betico Croes Day | January 25 |
| Carnival Monday | Monday before Ash Wednesday |
| National Anthem & Flag Day | March 18 |
| Good Friday | |
| Easter Monday | |
| Queen's Day | April 30 |
| Labor Day | May 1 |
| Ascension Day | May (varies) |
| Christmas Day<br>December 25 | |
| Boxing Day | December 26 |

## Carnival

If you're hoping to be in Aruba for Carnival you'd better make your reservations well in advance, since Carnival season is one of the most popular times of year to visit.

Aruba's first Carnival was held in 1954, the year that Curaçao cancelled its annual celebration in a show of empathy with Holland, which was suffering from the worst floods in its history. Just as they do now, many

Curaçaoans spent the year following one Carnival season preparing for and looking forward to the next. Unable to face a year without a Carnival, several of Curaçao's carnivalists organized a celebration on Aruba. The rest, as they say, is history. What was originally reserved for a few social clubs is now an island-wide event.

Carnival unofficially gets underway in January with impromptu **Jump-ups**, nocturnal dancing free-for-alls, dotting the streets and countryside. Carnival spirits rise almost uncontrollably as residents put the finishing touches on their extravagant costumes and colorful floats. Just as in Curaçao, competitions for the official theme music, musicians and singers, and the election of the Carnival Queen precede the Grand Parade. The **Lighting Parade**, organized by Aruba's oldest social club, the Tivoli Club, marks the beginning of Carnival. This is a week in which the tedium and worries of the rest of the year are replaced with merrymaking and dancing in streets filled with the joyous sounds of calypso, steel bands, Antillean *tumba*, Latin salsa and merengue. Children's parades and newer parades such as the Roller Blade Parade, Jou'vert and the 4 am Pajama Parade, lead up to the main event, the **Grand Parade** through the streets of Oranjestad on the Sunday before Ash Wednesday. Revelers rest on Monday to prepare for Tuesday's **Old Mask Parade** and the traditional Burning of the *Rey Momo*, the Mummer King, which marks the end of Carnival and the beginning of Lent.

*The Mummer King's ashes are distributed on Ash Wednesday.*

# Location & Getting There

Aruba is situated in the southern Caribbean, just 15 miles from the Peninsula of Paraguaná off the coast of Venezuela and 2,090 miles from New York. At 12°30' north and 70° west longitude**,** Aruba is the westernmost of the ABC Islands.

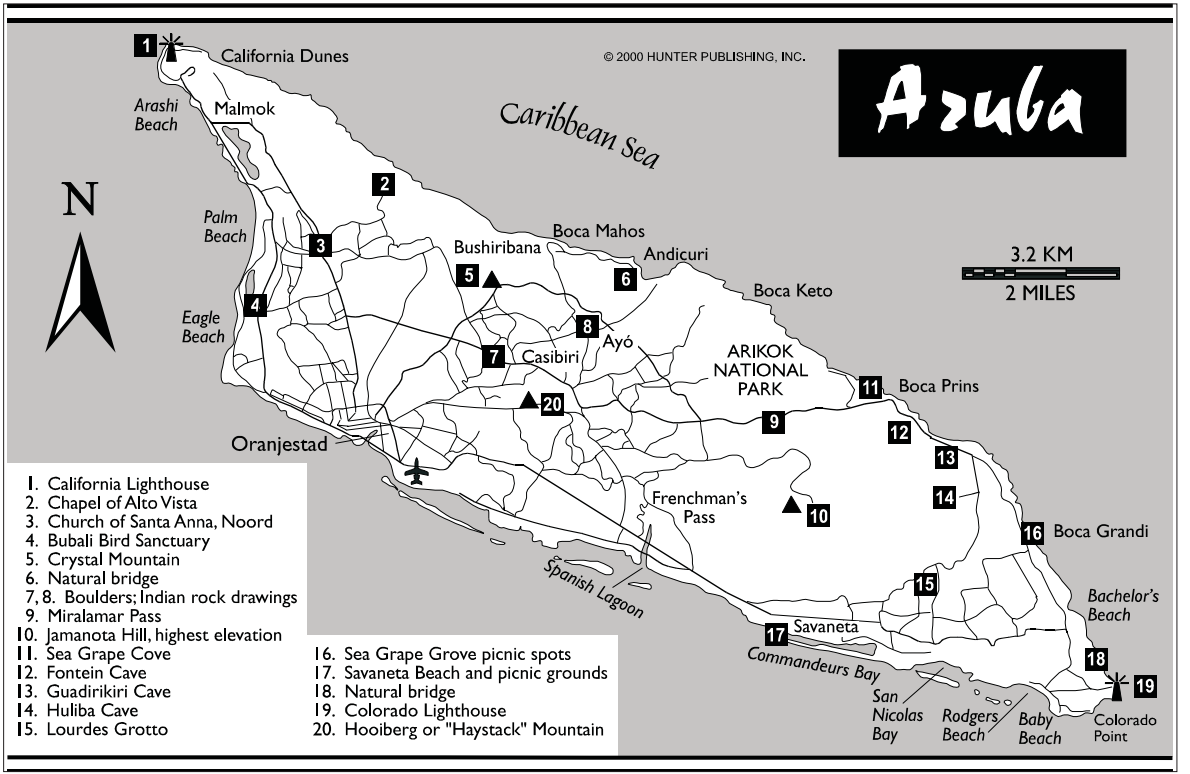
## By Air

Several carriers offer regular non-stop service to Aruba out of New York (JFK International), Newark, Miami, Baltimore, Tampa, Amsterdam, Caracas, Puerto Rico, Sint Martin, Bonaire, Brazil and Colombia.

**Air Aruba** ( 1-800/882-7822) offers daily non-stop service from Newark (8 am departure/12:40 arrival) and Miami (1:30 pm departure/3 pm arrival), as well as weekend service from Baltimore and several flights throughout the week from Tampa. Air Aruba also offers flights from Sao Paulo, Brazil and Caracas, Venezuela.

**American Airlines** ( 1-800/433-7300) has daily non-stop service from JFK (10:45 am departure/3:10 pm arrival) and Miami (11:30 am departure/2 pm arrival), as well as flights out of Newark and LaGuardia with connections in Miami and Puerto Rico.

**ALM** flies to Aruba out of Miami on Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays. Through its codeshare program with **United Airlines**, passengers flying on United from other U.S. cities connect in Miami with the ALM flights.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Aruba
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Casibiri
ARIKOK NATIONAL PARK
Boca Prins
Oranjestad
Frenchman's Pass
Boca Grandi
Spanish Lagoon
Savaneta
Commandeurs Bay
Bachelor's Beach
San Nicolas Bay
Rodgers Beach
Baby Beach
Colorado Point
1. California Lighthouse
2. Chapel of Alto Vista
3. Church of Santa Anna, Noord
4. Bubali Bird Sanctuary
5. Crystal Mountain
6. Natural bridge
7, 8. Boulders; Indian rock drawings
9. Miralamar Pass
10. Jamanota Hill, highest elevation
11. Sea Grape Cove
12. Fontein Cave
13. Guadirikiri Cave
14. Huliba Cave
15. Lourdes Grotto
16. Sea Grape Grove picnic spots
17. Savaneta Beach and picnic grounds
18. Natural bridge
19. Colorado Lighthouse
20. Hooiberg or "Haystack" Mountain

The codeshare fare is valid on direct flights only and reservations must be made through United ( 1-800/241-6522).

A few days in Aruba can easily be combined with a trip to Venezuela. **Avensa** ( 1-800/428-3672) offers daily flights between Aruba and Punto Fijo, Caracas and Maracaibo.

Travellers in Europe can fly directly to Aruba via Holland aboard **KLM** ( 1-800/374-7747) on Sunday, Monday, Thursday and Saturday.

In addition to the above, several charter flights are available from New York, Boston, Newark, Chicago, Washington D.C., Houston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Detroit and Canada.

## Via Cruise Ship

Aruba is among the most popular ports of call for cruise ships serving the Caribbean. One of the most exciting and luxurious is a transcanal cruise aboard **Celebrity Cruises'** ***Horizon***. Aruba is also a featured destination on Celebrity's 10- and seven-day southern Caribbean itineraries aboard the ultra-elegant ***Meridien*** and ***Zenith***. Service and facilities aboard a Celebrity liner are first-rate, and their cuisine has received rave reviews.

## Island Orientation

Covering an area of only 70 square miles, Aruba is the smallest of the ABC Islands. Not quite 20 miles long and extending six miles across at its widest point, the entire island can easily be explored in a day or even a morning.

Flights to Aruba land at the **Queen Beatrix International Airport** located on the island's southeast coast, five minutes south of the capital, Oranjestad. Cruise ships calling on Aruba dock at the passenger terminal in Oranjestad, steps away from shopping and restaurants. In-town hotels include the Sonesta Resort Hotel and Sonesta Suites at Seaport Village, the island's largest shopping/entertainment complex.

However, most of Aruba's hotels are located north of the capital on the perfect strip of palm-lined, sandy white beaches which extends for seven miles along Aruba's southwest coast. Low-rise hotels dominate the section of beach closest to Oranjestad known as Eagle Beach, while high-rise resorts, most with casinos and nightclubs, are further up the coast on the section known as Palm Beach. Many popular night spots and restaurants are in this area as well. L.G. Smith Boulevard, the main coastal road, travels the coast north connecting Oranjestad with the hotels and continuing all the way to the island's northwest point, known both as Kudarebe and California Point. A recent arrival in this area is the **Tierra del Sol Golf Course**, a par 71 championship course de-

signed by Robert Trent Jones. The calm waters of the south coast below the point offer excellent conditions for windsurfing and snorkeling. Just offshore in the area known as Malmok is the wreck of the German freighter *Antilla*, the largest wreck in the Caribbean.

Twelve miles below Oranjestad on the southeast coast, Aruba's "sunrise side," is San Nicolas, the second largest town on the island. Approaching the southeast tip, known as Colorado Point or Punta Basora, are some lovely smaller beaches including Baby Beach and Rodger's Beach. Some of the island's best reef dives are located just north of San Nicolas at Savaneta and the area around the Spanish Lagoon. Bachelor's Beach on the windward side of the point is a mecca for windsurfers.

In rugged contrast to the southern or leeward coast, Aruba's windward coast is characterized by rocky shores and pounding surf, by-products of the tradewinds blowing in from Africa. Dirt roads traverse the coast, which is known for its dramatic coral formations and wild beaches, where the crashing surf is best admired from afar. Just inland from the coast you'll find fascinating caves at Fontein, Guadirikiri and Huliba, where traces of Indian petroglyphs, centuries old, are still visible.

For a panoramic view of the island and nearby Venezuela head center island to

Hooiberg or Yamanota Hill – at 617 feet, the highest point on Aruba.

## Arrival & Getting To Your Hotel

You should have no trouble finding your way through Aruba's Queen Beatrix International Airport. After breezing through customs, you can hop a cab at the taxi stand just outside. Fares are calculated based on distance and are charged per cab, not per person. Fares to the Sonesta Resorts or Talk of the Town Hotel in Oranjestad should be under $10, while those to the hotels on Eagle Beach should be no more than $15, and to the high-rise hotels on Palm Beach no more than $20.

Major car rental agencies including Avis, Thrifty, Optima, Budget, National and several others, are located across the street. If you've made arrangements for a car, the agency van should be available to pick you up.

## Getting Around The Island

### Car Rentals

Since rentals are popular on Aruba, if you're planning to rent a car for the duration of your stay, it is advisable to make arrangements for a car prior to your arrival. You may also get a better rate by doing so. When making hotel reservations ask if there is a car rental agency on the property. If so, you may be able to rent a car at the same time. Jeeps are especially popular and are a good idea if you'll be carrying dive equipment or plan on exploring

the north coast. Though it is more expensive, we prefer to rent from the larger international agencies since their cars tend to be newer and better maintained.

The following agencies have branches at the airport and/or offer free pick-up and delivery:

**AVIS:** Queen Beatrix International Airport, 25496; Kolibristraat 14, 28787 or 28617, fax 2850; Americana Aruba Hotel.

**BUDGET:** Queen Beatrix International Airport, 25423; Kolibrestraat 1, 28600, fax 27212; Divi Tamarijn Beach Hotel and Divi Beach Resort.

**DOLLAR:** Queen Beatrix International Airport, 25651; Grenadaweg 15, 22783, fax 31237; Manchebo Beach Resort, 31237 or 26696.

**HERTZ:** Queen Beatrix International Airport, 24886; L.G. Smith Blvd. 142, 24545, fax 23012; De Palm Tours, Activity Desk, Holiday Inn, Americana Hotel, Manchebo Beach Resort, Divi-Divi Beach Resort, Divi Tamarijn Beach Hotel, Bushiri Beach Resort, Talk of the Town Hotel.

**NATIONAL:** Queen Beatrix International Airport, 25451, fax 38747; Tanki Leendert 170, 21967 or 24641; Holiday Inn.

**THRIFTY:** Queen Beatrix International Airport, 35335. Balashi 65, 55300/fax 50011.

In order to rent a car you must have a valid driving license that has been held for at least 24 months. The minimum age requirement varies by agency and the type of vehicle you wish to rent, and can be anywhere from 21 to 26 years of age. Maximum age is 65-70 years of age. Payment can be made in cash or by credit card. However, if you pay by cash you may need to leave a $500 deposit. Most agencies offer unlimited mileage. Insurance is recommended but will be of no avail if the driver involved in an accident is intoxicated.

## Driving Hints

Driving on Aruba is on the right. Right-hand turns at a red light are not permitted. When driving in Oranjestad, pay careful attention to street signs since many streets are one way. The speed limit in town is 25 mph, and usually 35 mph in the countryside. When driving in the *cunucu* or countryside as well as in some residential areas, keep a lookout for goats and wild donkeys. Arubans are extremely friendly and outgoing, and Aruban drivers are no exception. As a result, they have a tendency to stop unexpectedly to say hello and chat with a friend.

If it does happen to rain while you're in Aruba, exercise caution when driving. Since rainfall is rare, grease, oil and dust tend to accumulate on the roads, making them extremely slippery when wet.

## Buses

Buses run between Oranjestad and the hotels on Eagle and Palm Beach all day long, including Sundays and holidays. The bus station in Oranjestad is located behind the government building on Zoutmanstraat. At only $1, the fare is hard to beat. Ask at your hotel activity desk for schedule information or call **Arubus** at 27089.

## Motorcycles, Scooters & Bicycles

Two-wheelers are a great way to get around the island and are available at several agencies not far from the hotels. Avid mountain bikers will enjoy exploring the back roads of Aruba and the north coast. Your hotel activity desk should be able to make a recommendation or help you with arrangements. Always check the brakes and tires, lights, etc., before riding away. And remember, just because you're on vacation doesn't mean you can throw caution to the winds. To rent a motorcycle or scooter you must be at least 18 years of age and have a valid drivers license. Ask your hotel activity desk.

## Taxis

To call a cab, contact the central dispatch office at 22116 or 21604. Cabs do not have meters. Instead, fares have been fixed by the government. Ask the driver what the fare will be before getting into his cab. If you need transportation back to your hotel after dinner, you may request that a cab be called for you.

## Where To Stay

*Accommodations on Aruba are more expensive than on Bonaire and especially Curaçao.*

Happily, on Aruba you don't need to worry about paying a premium for a beachfront hotel since, no matter where you stay, you'll never be more than a few steps away from the beach. Most of Aruba's hotels are along the seven-mile strip of beach on the leeward coast above Oranjestad. Since 1986 the number of hotel rooms on the island has tripled, with options ranging from ultra-luxurious five-star resorts that will cater to your every whim, to all-suite accommodations with kitchenettes, or more traditional beach resorts and basic hotels.

If you prefer a hotel with a laid-back atmosphere, try one of the low-rise hotels or all-suite resorts on Eagle Beach, the portion of the strip closest to town. But if it's glitz and glamour you're after, then check into one of the high-rise resort hotels on Palm Beach, with their multiple restaurants, dazzling nightclubs and casinos, upscale boutiques and dramatic landscaping.

Regardless of where you stay, an air conditioned room is standard, as is a pool and, of course, watersports on the beach. Many hotels also have tennis courts and fitness centers. Mom and Dad will be happy to know that more and more hotels on Aruba are offering children's programs.

### Alive Price Scale

Our price scale is designed to give you a ballpark figure to plan with. It is based solely on

the price of a double room during high season, which generally runs from mid-December to mid-April, though exact dates will vary by hotel. Keep in mind that rates fall sharply at other times, with significant variations from hotel to hotel. Considerable savings may be had by taking advantage of special packages, such as those for honeymooners, divers and families. If you're planning on visiting during the off-season, you may also do better by reserving with the hotel directly rather than through a reservation service or travel agent.

Breakfast and meals are generally not included in the rate, though most hotels do offer separate meal plans. An 11% government tax is levied on the room rate and a 10-15% service charge will be added to the rate as well.

| | |
|---|---|
| Deluxe | $250+ |
| Expensive | $150-$250 |
| Moderate | $100-$150 |
| Inexpensive | Under $100 |

All hotels described take major credit cards unless specifically noted.

Since we prefer to stay on the beach, we'll start with the hotels on Palm Beach and work our way to town.

## High-Rise Resorts On Palm Beach

***HYATT REGENCY RESORT & CASINO***
*Palm Beach*
*L.G. Smith Blvd. 85*
*360 rooms*
*297-8-31234; fax 297-8-21682*
*In the U.S. and Canada, 1-800-233-1234*
*Deluxe*

As you've come to expect from virtually any Hyatt, the Hyatt Regency is a showplace. Breathtaking both inside and out, 8,000 square feet of multi-level pools and lagoons wind through 12 beautifully landscaped beachfront acres on the island's northwest coast. The richness and colorful embellishments of traditional Caribbean architecture surround guests in an atmosphere of casual elegance where soft tradewinds gently blow through archways and terraces and magnificent vistas of the Caribbean are around every corner.

Never short on ambience, dining is a pleasure at the Hyatt. Fashioned out of native island rock and overlooking the lagoon, the haunting splendor of **Ruinas del Mar** is a visual reminder of Aruba's gold mining past. For an evening of romance you'll long remember, dine at sunset aboard the Hyatt's catamaran. More casual dining is available all day long at the terraces, cafés or lounges with their swim-up convenience and beachside ambience.

Rooms are flawlessly appointed. Recreational facilities include a modern health spa with tennis courts, water sports available through

**Red Sail Sports**, a children's program and the **Casino Copacabana**.

### ARUBA MARRIOTT RESORT & STELLARIS CASINO

*Newest five-star resort.*

*Palm Beach*
*L.G. Smith Blvd.*
*413 rooms*
*297-8-69000*
*In the U.S. & Canada, 1-800-223-6388.*
*Fax 908-302-5231*
*Deluxe*

Oversized guest rooms and spacious balconies overlooking the Caribbean are among the many pleasures awaiting guests at the Marriot. Five-star features include a lovely free-form swimming pool with waterfalls and swim-up bar, a spectacular beach, a fitness center, nearby golf and tennis, informal outdoor dining at the **Seaview** and fine Italian cuisine at the **Tuscany** restaurant. And Lady Luck is always around to tempt guests at the opulent **Stellaris Casino**.

### RADISSON ARUBA RESORT & CASINO

*Palm Beach*
*J.E. Irausquin Blvd. 81*
*386 rooms*
*297-8-66555; fax 297-8-63260*
*In the U.S. & Canada, 1-800-333-3333*
*Expensive*

Aruba's original resort, the Radisson offers its guests unlimited opportunities for fun in the sun on and off its 1,500 feet of Palm Beach. Recreational offerings include swimming in the Caribbean or the Radisson's Olympic-size pool, water skiing, wave running, parasailing, catamaran sailing, snorkeling trips, sunset cruises, certified scuba

instruction and dive trips, beach volleyball, bacci ball, and four lighted tennis courts, with professional instruction available. Professional massage therapy can be arranged at the Health and Fitness Center.

Dining options are just as plentiful. Caribbean-inspired French cuisine is served in elegant surroundings at **Bistro 81**. The **Watapana Restaurant** features more casual dining, indoors or out, with a creative menu of Aruban, Caribbean and American-inspired specialties. The **Sunset Grill** is a favorite at lunch time as well as sunset. Tropical refreshments, quick snacks and great conversation are always available at **Breezes** in the open-air lobby, while tropical drinks are tops at the **Frozen Madness Beach Bar**. As if that weren't enough, ice cream and frozen yogurt served poolside at **Temptations** are nearly impossible to resist.

After-dark hours can be spent at the Casino or enjoying one of the Radisson's nightly dinner shows. The Guest Relations department will be more than happy to recommend island attractions as well.

**HOLIDAY INN ARUBA**
**BEACH RESORT & CASINO**

*All-inclusive and honeymoon packages are available.*

*Palm Beach*
*J.E. Irausquin Blvd. 230*
*600 rooms/8 floors*
*297-8-63600; fax 297-8-65165*
*In the U.S. & Canada, 1-800-HOLIDAY*
*Expensive*

Taking advantage of its waterfront location on Palm Beach, the Holiday Inn offers its

guests water sports galore, including parasailing, windsurfing, PADI certified diving, snorkeling and, of course, the air mattress. Back on dry land, there's tennis, a modern fitness center, and hammocks that have been strategically placed throughout the beautifully landscaped gardens. A sports bar, night club and casino round out the entertainment. Dining options include American, Latin, Oriental and Island cuisine. Rooms are comfortable and feature the standard amenities, including pay-per-view movies.

**AMERICANA ARUBA**
**BEACH RESORT & CASINO**
*Palm Beach*
*J.E. Irausquin Blvd. 83*
*400 rooms*
*297-8-64500; fax 297-8-63191*
*In the U.S. and Canada, 1-800-203-4475*
*Deluxe*

Located on the strip at Palm Beach, the Americana is a terrific value for young, active families. Kids between the ages of 4 and 13 can sign up for the **Americana Aruba Adventure Club**, which will keep them happily entertained from 9:30 am to 5 pm, with a break for lunch. Meanwhile, Mom and Dad can sign up for snorkeling, scuba, windsurfing, sailing, water skiing or fishing with Red Sail Sports. The Americana also has its own lighted tennis courts, volley ball beach pit, a modern exercise facility and its centerpiece, a free-form fantasy pool with cascading waterfalls, built-in current, whirlpool spas and swim-up bar.

*Red Sail also offers special sunset and moonlight cruises.*

Restaurants offer both casual and more formal dining. The Americana has a small casino featuring roulette, craps, blackjack and slots, and a night club.

**WYNDHAM ARUBA BEACH RESORT & CASINO**
*Palm Beach*
*J.E. Irausquin Blvd. 77*
*444 rooms*
*297-8-64466; fax 297-8-63403*
*In the U.S. and Canada, 1-800-996-3426*
*Deluxe*
Formerly the Hilton, the Wyndham features a spacious beach area, a large free-form freshwater swimming pool, a shopping arcade, fitness center, three restaurants, and a casino. All rooms have a patio with an ocean view. However, not all overlook the Caribbean directly. To avoid disappointment, specify the type of view you want when when making reservations. The Music Hall Night Club adjacent to the casino features a popular cocktail show.

## Low-Rise & All-Suite Resorts On Eagle Beach

**LA CABANA ALL-SUITE BEACH RESORT & CASINO**
*Eagle Beach*
*J.E. Irausquin Blvd. 250*
*P.O. Box 1012*
*441 suites*
*297-8-79000; fax 297-8-77208*
*In the U.S. & Canada, 1-800-835-7193*
*In New York, 212-251-1767*
*In Europe, (Holland) 31-4758-2409; fax 31-4758-2635.*
*Expensive*

La Cabana is a terrific choice for families and fitness enthusiasts. Suites range from studios for one to two people all the way up to three bedrooms that will sleep six to 10. Parents can spend some carefree time on their own, leaving kids between the ages of five and 12 in the hands of the trained staff of **Club Cabana Nana**, where they'll play games on the beach, at the playground or in the pool, do arts and crafts or listen to stories. Teens can join up with the **Cabana Teen Club** and hang out with their own crowd windsurfing, playing billiards, snorkeling and participating in other supervised activities.

*All accommodations feature remote control color TV, direct dial telephone, whirlpool, hairdryer, private patio or balcony, in-room safe and a sophisticated sprinkler system including smoke detectors.*

Of course families can enjoy La Cabana's facilities together as well. Eagle Beach is a great place to start, with waterskiing, diving, snorkeling, sailing, windsurfing, glass-bottom boat rides and catamaran cruises arranged through the watersports center. The oversized free-form swimming pool features a children's area with a slide and poolside whirlpools for the older folk. The Health and Racquet Club Center features advanced exercise equipment, including Lifecycle and Lifestep machines, free weights and circuit weight training equipment, as well as aerobics classes. Two racquetball courts, two squash courts and five lighted tennis courts, followed by men's and women's saunas and a relaxing massage, round out the list of facilities.

La Cabana's long list of dining options should satisfy even the most finicky kids. There's fresh seafood at **The Pawnbroker**, northern

Italian cuisine at **Spats**, prime cut steaks at the **Trading Company** and continental fare at **The Captain's Table**. Snacks and light lunches are served poolside at the **Aquarius Restaurant & Bar**. Best of all is the **Yogurt & Espresso Bar** for dessert. Or, if nothing but Mom's cooking will do, all suites feature a fully equipped kitchenette and there's a mini-market conveniently located right on the premises.

### COSTA LINDA BEACH RESORT

*Eagle Beach*
*J.E. Irausquin Blvd. 59*
*P.O. Box 1345*
*155 suites*
*297-8-38000; fax 297-8-36040*
*In the U.S. & Canada, 1-800-992-2015.*
*From Europe: InterConnect (Germany)*
*49-89-555-335; fax 49-89 523-2212*
*Expensive*

*Prices are in the deluxe range, but since rooms are shared among more than two persons, we've categorized it as expensive.*

Best for families and small groups, accommodations at the Costa Linda are limited to two- and three-bedroom suites. Each suite has a private balcony along with a fully equipped kitchen, baths with Roman tubs and separate showers, two multi-channel remote controlled television sets, and two direct dial telephones. In keeping with its name (Beautiful Coast) the Costa Linda is located on a 600-foot stretch of the widest beach on the island, and also features a beautifully landscaped free-form tropical pool complete with whirlpools and even a small island at its center. Other facilities include lighted tennis courts, a fitness center and three restaurants offering snacks, casual and formal dining.

**MANCHEBO BEACH RESORT**
*Eagle Beach*
*J.E. Irausquin Blvd. 55*
*P.O.Box 4185*
*71 rooms*
*297-8-23444; fax 297-8-33667*
*In the U.S., Canada and Europe, Best Western at 1-800-528-1234 or 1-800-223-1108*
*Expensive*

This sprawling low-rise resort is located on Eagle Beach, the largest beach on the island. Renovated in 1994/95, rooms are spacious and overlook the beach or the resort's garden areas. The on-site dive shop features certified instruction and equipment rental for snorkeling, diving and underwater photography. Tennis is available next door and the Alhambra Bazaar and Casino are just across the street.

The outdoor **Patio Restaurant** and **Pega Pega Beachside Bar & Grill** feature festive entertainment nights, sumptuous buffets and island shows. A gourmet menu is featured at the **French Steak House**.

**TAMARIJN ARUBA BEACH RESORT**
*Eagle Beach*
*J.E. Irausquin Blvd. 41*
*236 rooms*
*297-8-24150*
*Fax 297-8-34002*
*In the U.S., Canada and Europe, 1-800-554-2008*
*Expensive (all-inclusive)*
The Tamarijn is located on Eagle Beach adjacent to the Alhambra Bazaar and Casino. Guests enjoy unlimited watersports (applies to non-motorized equipment only), including snorkeling, windsurfing, Sunfish, and float

mattresses, with instruction for beginners. There's also tennis, beach volleyball, mountain bikes, a fitness area, and unlimited food and drink. Nightly entertainment, including special theme nights, add to the fun.

**BUCUTI BEACH RESORT**
*Eagle Beach*
*63 rooms*
*P.O. Box 1299*
*297-8-36141; in the U.S., 1-800-223-1108*
*For European reservations, contact your nearest KLM representative.*
*Expensive (low end)*

Located on Eagle Beach, the Bucuti Beach Resort offers its guests four acres of powder white sand. Virtually all rooms overlook the beach and are well-equipped with a microwave oven, refrigerator, mini bar, cable television, an in-room safe and a king- or queen-size bed. Complimentary coffee and tea service is also provided.

**The Pirate's Nest Restaurant** offers romantic dining inside a 17th-century Dutch galleon that has seemingly washed up on the beach. A live steel band makes sunset happy hour extra special and will help to put you in the mood to limbo under the stars.

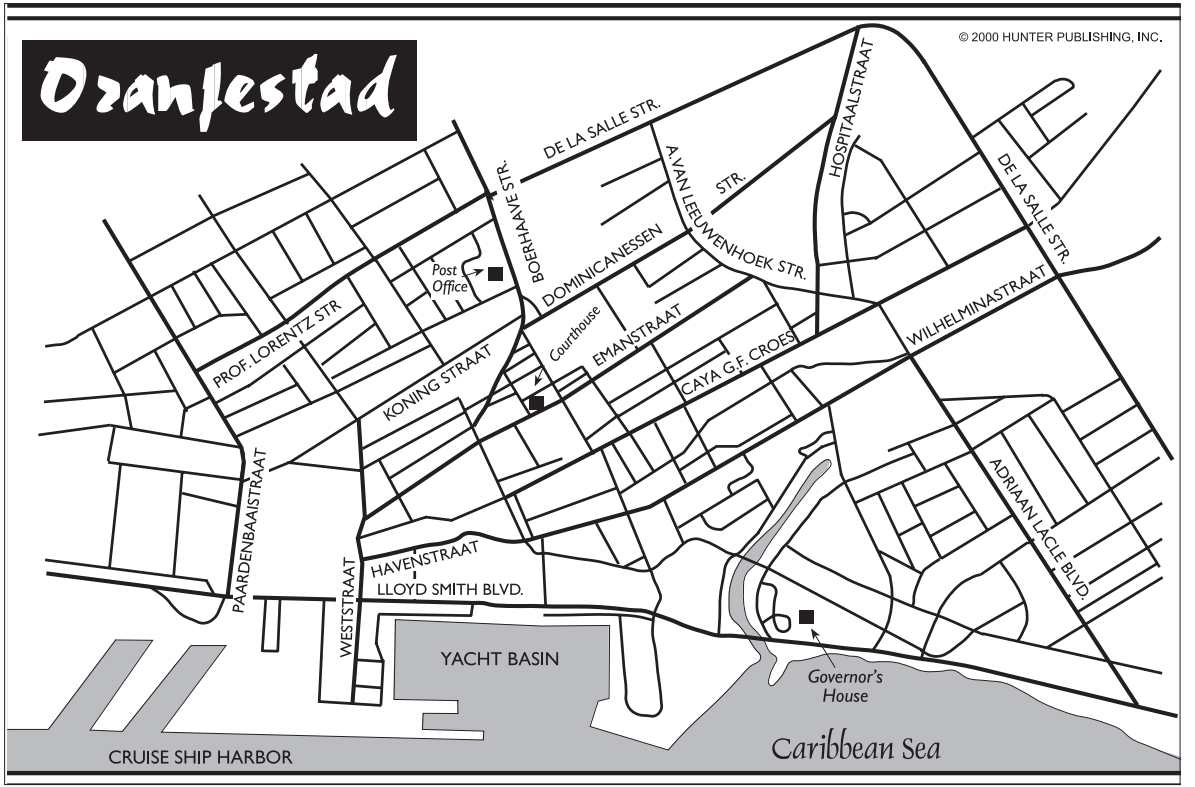
## Hotels Just Off The Beach

**THE MILL CONDOMINIUM RESORT**
*J.E. Irausquin Blvd.*
*P.O. Box 1012*
*200 rooms*
*297-8-67700; fax 297-8-67271*
*Expensive (low end)*

The Mill offers you a choice of jacuzzi, kitchenette or both. This two-storey condominium resort features adjoining suites that can be rented separately or grouped together to create your ideal accommodation. Variations include the Royal Den, which features a mirrored bath area with jacuzzi and a king-size bed; Junior Suite with kitchenette, sitting area, patio and full-size bed; and a Studio, which has a full kitchen and dining area, a bath with a shower and a sofa bed. You can combine the studio with the Royal Den to create a one-bedroom suite or go all the way and put the three rooms together to create a two-bedroom suite that can comfortably accommodate six persons.

The Mill is just steps away from Palm Beach as well as from nightlife and restaurants. Rooms are in low-rise buildings set amidst tropical gardens and there are two free-form swimming pools with swim-up bar. Tennis and an exercise room and sauna are also on the premises.

**STAUFFER HOTEL**
*J.E. Irausquin Blvd.*
*100 rooms*
*P.O. Box 4185*
*297-8-60855; fax 297-8-60856*
*Moderate*
You'll find a solid value at the Stauffer Hotel, which offers clean, comfortable rooms in a convenient location not far from casinos, nightlife and shopping. Excursions, car rentals and watersports can be arranged through the reception desk.


Oranjestad
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LLOYD SMITH BLVD.
WESTSTRAAT
YACHT BASIN
Governor's House
CRUISE SHIP HARBOR
Caribbean Sea

**AMSTERDAM MANOR BEACH RESORT**
*J.E. Irausquin Boulevard 252*
*P.O. Box 1302*
*72 rooms*
*297-8-71492; fax 297-8-71463*
*In the U.S, 1-800-766-6016.*
*Moderate*
Europeans dominate the guest list at the Amsterdam Beach Resort. Located across from Eagle Beach, this 72-room low-rise resort features Dutch hospitality and colonial charm. Studio, one- and two-bedroom suites are available. Each has a terrace or balcony and a fully equipped kitchen or kitchenette, cable television, direct dial telephone and an in-room safe. Facilities include a restaurant and bar, swimming pool with waterfall, a laundry room, and a mini-market. Baby sitting services can be arranged. Hotel activities include a Manager's Cocktail Party with bikini and carnival show, BBQ Night, Aruba Night and sunset happy hour. Two afternoon sessions of poolside diving instruction are included in the room rate.

## Hotels In Oranjestad

**SONESTA RESORTS AT SEAPORT VILLAGE**
*Oranjestad*
*L.G. Smith Blvd. 9*
*300 rooms/250 suites*
*297-8-3600; fax 297-8-34389*
*In the U.S. and Canada, 1-800-SONESTA*
*For reservations from Europe: fax 31-20-4000-112*
*Deluxe*
The Sonesta Resorts at Seaport Village offer the best of all that is possible on Aruba. Guests have fabulous shopping, terrific din-

*Complimentary water taxi service departs from the lobbies of the Sonesta Suites and Sonesta Resort every 20 minutes from 8 am to 8 pm.*

*The Resort and Casino was designated a Superior First Class Hotel by the Official Hotel Guide. Sonesta Suites recently received Interval International's Superior Service Award.*

ing, a marina and the island's most spectacular casino right at their doorstep. A unique downtown location puts many of the island's historic and cultural attractions within walking distance.

Best of all, Sonesta guests have their own private paradise, **Sonesta Island**. A mere eight minutes away by launch, this 40-acre tropical retreat of beaches, quiet coves and mangroves is reserved exclusively for Sonesta guests.

The island's six beaches are considered by many to be among Aruba's finest, and include a remote strand for naturalists and the very special Honeymoon Beach, with its own masseuse. Snorkeling couldn't be any better; there are crystal clear waters and coral reefs all around. A branch of **Red Sail Sports** right on the island caters to divers and watersports enthusiasts, providing equipment rental, boat dives and PADI certified dive instruction, along with windsurfing (with instruction), kayaking, banana boats, sunfish, and waterskiing. Of course there's always the option of a float bed or a lounge chair strategically placed beside a palm.

Activities aren't limited to sand and sea. There's a hiking trail around the island for nature lovers, as well as a fitness center and tennis court. As for refreshments, the **Seabreeze Bar** serves cool tropical drinks all day long and will even deliver them to your lounge chair. The **Seabreeze Restaurant** offers snacks, ice cream and lunch from 11 am to 4 pm. If you run out of suntan lotion or need

some good beach reading, not to worry. The island even has its own sundry shop.

Back on the mainland, guests have the option of staying at either the **Sonesta Resort** or **Sonesta Suites**. Both feature luxurious accommodations, decorated in soft Caribbean colors with all the amenities of a five-star resort. They have landscaped outdoor swimming pools with swim-up bars and poolside restaurants. Sonesta's *Just Us Kids* Program of supervised activities for children, daytime and evening, is available at both. Sonesta Suites offers the added benefit of an ultra-modern, fully furnished kitchenette, ideal for families or travellers who want more freedom. Those who prefer to avoid the kitchen altogether can dine elegantly at **L'Escale**, one of Aruba's finest restaurants; enjoy international cuisine in a more casual setting at **The Brasserie**; or head for the restaurants and sidewalk cafés at the Seaport Marketplace.

In between trips to Sonesta Island and shopping at Seaport Village, casino-goers can try their luck at the **Crystal** or **Seaport Casinos.** Deep-sea fishing charters and sailing trips can be arranged at the marina. There's music and dancing every night except Sunday at the **Desires Nightclub**, located off the main lobby at the Sonesta Resort.

**TALK OF THE TOWN RESORT HOTEL**
*Oranjestad*
*L.G. Smith Blvd. 2*
*63 rooms*
*297-8-23380; fax 297-8-33208*
*In the U.S., Canada and Europe, Best Western at 1-800-528-1234 or 1-800-223-1108*
*Moderate*

A casual international atmosphere and highly personalized service are among the many reasons to opt for this low key resort, a 15-minute stroll from downtown Oranjestad. Rooms surround a lovely palm-fringed courtyard with a swimming pool, jacuzzi, and the poolside **Moonlight Bar and Grill**, a popular meeting place among guests and residents alike. The more formal **Talk of the Town Restaurant**, a member of the Chaine des Rotisseurs, is open for dinner only and serves superb continental cuisine.

Across the street is Talk of the Town's private **Surfside Beach Club**. It features a freshwater pool and two jacuzzis, as well as diving, snorkeling, fishing and equipment rental from Aruba Aqua Sport.

Other resort options include the **Divi Aruba Beach Resort** on Eagle Beach ( U.S., 1-800/367-3484 or 297-803-5000, local) and the **Casa del Mar Beach Resort** next door ( 297-827000/fax 26557). If you prefer to economize on accommodations and splurge in other areas, consider renting an apartment. **Nashville Suites** ( 297-829030/fax 29040), located just a few minutes away from beaches and downtown, offers basic yet comfortable

apartments, as does **Sasaki Apartments** ( 297-877482 or 76474/fax 784480). **Palm Beach Apartments** ( 297-867786 or 61885) is a similar choice just a short walk from Palm Beach.

## Dining

***The Alive Price Scale***
*Expensive - $35+ pp*
*Moderate - $25+*
*Inexpensive - under $25*

As lovely as the island is, it's not surprising that many talented chefs have settled in Aruba. Falling in with the island's relaxed atmosphere, they've tempered their classical training with local ingredients to create a wealth of innovative new dishes.

With literally no end in sight to the list of fine dining options available, it's no wonder that many consider Aruba the gastronomic center of the Caribbean. Restaurants range from casually elegant to island casual, and they offer an eclectic selection of cuisines from around the world. To help you experience the best the island has to offer, we've put together a list of those restaurants we believe best represent Aruba's culinary prowess.

Dinner reservations are advisable and even required at most restaurants, especially during high season. If you're planning to dine at one of the more elegant restaurants, you should dress appropriately – a sports jacket for men and a dress or pants suit for women. Ties are optional and rare. Otherwise, casual resort wear will be fine. A 10-15% service charge will be added to your bill. If not, a 10-20% tip, according to the quality of the service you received, is appropriate. Keep in

mind that the service charge does not go directly to your waitperson but is also used to cover restaurant costs. Tipping is at your discretion.

## For A Special Occasion - Or No Reason At All

### CHEZ MATILDE

*Havenstraat 23*
*34968*
*French cuisine*
*Noon-2:30 pm; 6-11 pm*
*Expensive*
*Proper attire is required*

A member of the Chåine des Rotisseurs since 1989, Chez Matilde enjoys a well-earned reputation as one of the finest restaurants in the Caribbean. It is located in a 19th-century townhouse, immaculately restored and luxuriously decorated to offer guests an evening of fine dining in a relaxed setting. Guests may dine indoors in one of two intimate dining rooms separated by carefully restored stone walls, or in the glass-enclosed Pavilion amidst tropical gardens and fountains.

The menu features classic French cuisine with an emphasis on seafood and imported cultured beef, accompanied by a carefully selected wine list. The luncheon menu offers a lighter selection of Cuisine Naturelle. As an introduction to the dining experience that awaits them, guests are invited to savor a welcoming glass of *Kirr Mathilde*, a delightful blend of champagne, strawberry liqueur, crême de bananas and fresh strawberries at the brass-lined bar. Exemplary service.

**L'ESCALE**
*Aruba Sonesta Resort & Casino*
*36000 (reservations are advised)*
*Contemporary tropical cuisine*
*6:30-11 pm.*
*Expensive*
*Proper attire is required*
The innovative menu at L'Escale artfully introduces the culinary flair of the Caribbean into classic and progressive continental cuisines to create a dining experience unlike any other. Pan roasted jerk quail with a papaya-tamarind glaze and funchi fleurons; filet of salmon served on a bed of spinach with a light curry-spiced citrus and avocado salsa; baked Caribbean grouper crusted with plantains and served with a poblano pepper variety, sweet onion and a touch of Madame Jeannette; Chateaubriand for two served with Caribbean vegetables; and calypso chicken, boneless chicken breast stuffed with king crab meat, wild rice, corn and chives and served with a morel sauce. These are among the many offerings guaranteed to dazzle your taste buds.

L'Escale features an elegant setting above the Crystal Casino, overlooking the waterfront at Oranjestad. Music is provided by a Hungarian string orchestra. L'Escale also features a delightful Sunday brunch. Diners actually go into the kitchen to place their omelette order with the chef.

**GASPARITO**
*Gasparito 3*
*67044*
*Aruban cuisine*
*5:30-11 pm; closed Sunday*
*Expensive*
Gasparito features award-winning local cuisine served in an authentic *cunucu*, a countryside home just minutes from the high-rise hotels along Palm Beach. When they opened their restaurant, gracious hosts Joyce Barsels-Daal and Gladys Croses hoped to create an atmosphere in which island guests could appreciate both the local cuisine and culture. The dining room doubles as an art gallery displaying works by talented local artists. Many of the pieces on display are for sale. Don't hesitate to ask if you see something you're interested in. The menu features steak, seafood and local specialties, including *keshi yena, stoba di bestia* (goat stew) and the Aruban Combo – a platter of fish cakes, *kari kari* and chicken stew. Be sure to try the Pan Bati, Aruban pancakes made with salt, sugar, corn and flour.

**VENTANAS DEL MAR**
*Tierra del Sol Golf Course*
*67800*
*International cuisine*
*11:30-3 pm; 6-10:30 pm.*
*Expensive*
Golfers and non-golfers alike should plan a meal at Ventanas del Mar in the clubhouse at the Tierra del Sol Golf Club. Lunch is best, or arrive before sunset so you will see the spectacular golf course and the Caribbean views. Managed by Hyatt Aruba, NV, who refuse to be outdone by the scenery. The dining room is

lovely and the menu features superbly prepared international dishes.

**VALENTINO'S**
*Caribbean Palm Village Resort*
*62700 (reservations are strongly recommended)*
*Italian cuisine*
*6-11 pm; closed Sunday*
*Expensive*
Dining at Valentino's is an occasion, so be sure to dress appropriately. Located in a separate building within the Caribbean Palm Village Resort, it features a few different dining areas, including one reserved especially for honeymooners. Pastas are homemade in the downstairs kitchen and you can watch the chef at work upstairs. The Italian region where each dish originated is indicated on the menu.

**SPATS**
*Royal Cabana Casino*
*La Cabana Beach Resort*
*79000*
*Northern Italian cuisine*
*5 pm-1 am*
*Expensive*
You can break up a night of gambling or go on an all-out splurge with your winnings at this tri-level restaurant overlooking the Royal Cabana Casino. Actually this is three restaurants in one. You can choose from among the Italian specialties on the **Spats** menu; sample a steak from **La Cabana Trading Co.**; or try any one of the seafood delights offered by **The Pawnbroker**. Noteworthy selections include Spats' specialty pasta sauces; the Trading Co.'s Beef Wellington; and the Seafood Orgy, a mélange of shrimp, scallops,

crab, lobster, fish and clams assembled by the Pawnbroker, then baked in a cream sauce with mushrooms and parmesan cheese and glazed with cognac.

## Local Cuisine

### OLD CUNUCU HOUSE

*Palm Beach 150*
*61666*
*Local and Continental cuisine*
*6-11 pm; closed Sunday*
*Moderate*

Dining is a pleasure in this restored Aruban homestead built over 80 years ago. Executive Chef Ligia Maria has created a menu featuring an inspired combination of international and local cuisine. Seafood lovers should try the *seafood Palm Beach* – lobster, fish, shrimp, scallops and squid served in a delightful cream sauce flavored with wine and flamed with Pernod. The *filet of beef fondue* (for two) features small cuts of beef which diners prepare themselves in sizzling hot oil and a variety of sauces. The Old Cunucu's specialty coffees are a terrific ending to a meal in this lovely traditional setting.

### MI CUSHINA

*Noord Cura Cabai 24*
*(just off the main road to San Nicolas)*
*48335 or 45871 (reservations are advised)*
*Local cuisine*
*Noon-2 pm; 6 pm-10 pm*
*Closed Thursday*
*Inexpensive to moderate*

You just may get the chance to try iguana soup at Mi Cushina (My Kitchen). Home style Aruban cooking features local favorites such

as *stoba di bestia chiquito* – stewed goat or lamb with *pan batí* (pancake-like bread) and fried fish with *funchi* (corn meal prepared like polenta) as well as other traditional seafood, meat and chicken dishes. The museum-like setting is a delight, with its coffee bag ceiling, wagon wheel light fixtures, antique photographs and assorted tools and kitchen utensils. Among the paraphernalia is a display of the equipment that was used to produce aloe vera up until the 1930's.

**BRISAS DEL MAR**
*Savaneta 222*
*47718*
*Seafood and local cuisine*
*Noon-2:30 pm; 6:30-9:30 pm*
*Closed Monday*
*Inexpensive*
Located in the fishing village of the same name, Brisas del Mar has been a local favorite for years. The restaurant itself was once a fisherman's hut. Not surprisingly, fish prepared island-style dominates the menu. *Keri keri*, fish sautéed with vegetables and fresh herbs, is a personal favorite. The *sopi di pisca*, fish soup, is equally delicious. You'll dine in a lovely, open-air setting alongside the Caribbean.

## An Extra Special Choice

*Charlie's Bar is a must!*

**CHARLIE'S BAR**
*Zeppenfeldstraat, 56*
*San Nicolas*
*45086*
*Seafood*
*12 noon-9:30 pm; closed Sunday*
*Bar is open 10 am-midnight*
*Inexpensive, credit cards not accepted*

An island institution, Charlie's is **the** watering hole in San Nicolas, the second largest town on the island. Its former owner is legendary, gone but never forgotten, and now his son carries on in his spirit. Hollanders Charlie and Marie Brouns founded Charlie's Bar in 1941. When the Second World War made San Nicolas a boom town, Charlie's became a favorite hangout for seamen, contractors, refinery and harbor workers. Needless to say, they were a pretty rough crowd. Nowadays, artists, musicians, writers and island visitors have replaced the old crowd, but the bar is full of memorabilia from the old days. Charlie's is famous for its special atmosphere and known for its creole cooking, shrimp, squid, overstuffed sandwiches and cold beer. In keeping with tradition, be sure to staple your business card to the wall. Mine's there!

**BOONOONOONOOS**
*Wilhlminastraat 18a*
*31888*
*French and Caribbean cuisine*
*6 pm-10:30 pm*
*Moderate*
Boonoonoonoos is a self-proclaimed "Caribbean Bistroquet." They must be referring to their hybrid French/Caribbean cuisine. Innovative dishes from islands across the Caribbean are served in a warm and friendly atmosphere. House specialties include Jamaican jerk ribs made from a 300-year-old recipe, curried chicken Trinidad, keshi yena, carne con papas Domenique (sliced tenderloin served in a creole sauce), roast chicken Barbados (prepared with coconut and plantain), and mountain chicken (froglegs). The

historic mansion that houses this bistroquet was the first to export aloe oil extract to England.

**LE PETIT CAFÉ**
*Emmastraat 1*
*26577*
*International cuisine*
*11 am-11 pm; closed Sunday lunch*
*Moderate*

*There is another Le Petit Café in the Americana Resort.*

As charming as its name, this lovely restaurant offers shady outdoor dining or you can eat indoors in an air conditioned dining room. Steak and chicken dishes are served on heated rocks as part of the last stage of cooking. Known as "Romancing the Stone," it keeps the meat warm while allowing diners to make sure that their meal is cooked to taste. In addition to a variety of steaks, the menu features local specialties and plenty of seafood.

**THE PIRATE'S NEST**
*Bucuti Beach Resort*
*J.E. Irausquin Blvd. 55-B*
*36100*
*Steaks and seafood*
*7 am-11:30 pm*
*Moderate*

*There's no air conditioning so a table on deck is best.*

Will the real Henry Morgan please stand up? It's hard to imagine a more delightfully Caribbean setting than aboard this 17th-century Dutch galleon washed ashore on Eagle Beach. Come for the Sunset Happy Hour, with entertainment provided by a steel band, followed by dinner under the stars and a stroll along the beach.

**THE MILL**
*J.E. Irausquin Blvd. 330*
*62060*
*International cuisine*
*6 pm-11 pm; closed Sunday*
ModerateAnother favorite among repeat visitors, The Mill has a well-deserved reputation for excellence. Entrées are expertly prepared using only the finest quality U.S. steaks, chicken and veal, along with fresh fish and seafood from the Caribbean. If you choose the hearty Dutch-style pea soup, a house specialty, as an appetizer, order something light as a main course so you'll have room for one of The Mill's outrageous chocolate desserts.

The Mill is an authentic Dutch windmill imported from Holland and reconstructed on Aruba. The Dutch theme is artfully carried over into the dining room, with beautiful Dutch antiques, decorative tiles and paintings.

**PAVAROTTI**
*Palm Beach 17A*
*60644*
*Italian and Argentinean grill*
*6-10 pm*
*Moderate*

*Pavarotti is run by the same management as the Old Cunucu House.*

Everyone in your dinner party should find something to their liking at Pavarotti. The generous menu offers delicious Italian cuisine along with steaks and chops grilled Argentinean-style. There's a hot and cold antipasto bar for starters or you can make it a meal.

**EL GAUCHO**
*Wilhelminastraat 80*
*23677*
*Argentinean steaks and seafood*
*11 am-2:30 pm; 5:30-11 pm*
*Closed Sunday*
*Moderate*
Though the pampas of Argentina and the Caribbean are thousands of miles apart, El Gaucho has managed to bring them a little closer. Reminiscent of La Cabaña, one of the best steakhouses in Buenos Aires, El Gaucho serves authentic Argentine *parrillada* prepared exclusively with beef imported from Argentina. You'll also find a selection of seafood dishes. Clever renovations have transformed this Aruban townhouse into an Argentine *estancia.*

**WATERFRONT CRABHOUSE**
*Seaport Marketplace*
*35858*
*Seafood*
*Noon-4 pm; 5:30-10:30 pm*
*Moderate*
If you enjoy vacationing in the Caribbean but prefer the cooler waters of the Atlantic when it comes to seafood, the Waterfront Crabhouse will be just right. Atlantic swordfish, sea scallops, tiger shrimp, mahi mahi, sole and yellow tuna fly in direct from the Boston Fish Market every morning. Live Maine lobsters are shipped in three times a week. Seasonal specialties such as Maryland soft shell crabs have not been overlooked. Nor have locally caught red snapper and grouper been left off the menu.

**THE FLAME**
*Noord 19A*
*64688*
*Steaks and international cuisine*
*6-10:30 pm; closed Wednesday*
*Expensive*
European-born owner Dieter Fischer brings a world of culinary experience to your table. After graduating from culinary school he toured the kitchens of the great hotels and restaurants of Europe, the world's most luxurious cruise lines, and even spent some time at the Four Seasons in New York, all the while picking up recipes and dreaming of opening his own restaurant. Now his guests at The Flame share in the dream and reap the benefit of his experience, enjoying succulent tournedos forestiere, Chateaubriand, flaming steak Diane and other house specialties. Reserve ahead and request a window table in the garden.

**KOWLOON**
*Emmastraat 11*
*24950*
*Chinese cuisine*
*11 am-10 pm*
*Moderate*
Since 1972 Kowloon has been serving Aruba's best Chinese cuisine, featuring the regional specialties of Shanghai, Hunan, Canton, Szechwan and Peking. The selection of seafood platters seems endless, as do the various fish, fowl, pork and beef dishes prepared in an infinite array of sauces. The regular and seafood rice tables are equally appealing. Kowloon is located downtown just two blocks from Seaport Village.

**OKURA DYNASTY**
*Havenstraat 25, downtown*
*21349*
*Japanese and Thai cuisine*
*Noon-2:30 pm; 6-11 pm. Closed Sunday*
*Moderate*
The Okura Dynasty is best known for the Japanese steaks and seafood which the teppanyaki chef artfully prepares at your tableside hibachi. Also not to be missed are the sushi, the Okura steamed fish and other Thai specialties.

**MAMA MIA**
*L.G. Smith Blvd. 83*
*36246*
*Italian cuisine*
*Noon-11:30 pm*
*Inexpensive*
Located across the street from the Seaport Village Mall, Mama Mia offers live music daily. The menu features pizza and other Italian specialties, as well as salads, seafood, chicken dishes and steak.

**CAFÉ THE PADDOCK**
*L.G. Smith Blvd. 13*
*29021*
*Dutch café cuisine*
*11 am-11 pm. The bar is open to 2 am*
*Inexpensive*
This true-to-life Dutch café is located next to the fruitmarket on the waterfront in Oranjestad. Offerings include burgers, grilled sandwiches, omelettes, salads, and full dinners, including a pita bread with beef platter, a shrimp platter, the catch of the day, and a mixed grill platter. An all-you-can-eat spare rib special is featured on Wednesday eve-

nings. There are two-for-one happy hours Tuesday night from 11 pm to midnight and Sunday afternoons at 5 pm.

**TALK OF THE TOWN**
*Talk of the Town Resort*
*L.G. Smith Boulevard 2 (between town and the airport)*
*23380*
*International cuisine*
*5:30-11 pm; closed Monday*
*Moderate*
Consistent quality has made Talk of The Town a favorite of repeat guests to Aruba for over 30 years. Panoramic views, fine international cuisine and live entertainment make for a pleasant evening in town. The menu features standard favorites such as veal Marsala, prime rib and lobster tail in garlic sauce, and the house specialty, Chateaubriand prepared at tableside. Flaming desserts are a spectacular finale to a delightful meal.

**LA PALOMA**
*Noord 39*
*74611*
*Italian seafood*
*6-11 pm; closed Tuesday*
*Inexpensive*
*Proper attire is required.*
Hearty eaters will meet their match at La Paloma. If you like your pasta piled high, this is the place for you. Otherwise, consider sharing. House specialties include fried fish stuffed with shrimp and mushrooms, veal Marsala, chicken cacciatore, and a 12 oz. lobster fra diavola.

## For A Taste Of The Good Old USA

**HOULIHANS**
*Palm Beach 184*
@BODY TXTSML = All American cuisine
*11 am-11 pm*
*Inexpensive*
An Aruban spin has been put on this American favorite. But if you're not in the mood for surprises, you'll be glad to know that the menu resembles the one back home. A better night spot than restaurant, the live entertainment lasts hours after the kitchen closes.

**BON BINI BAGELS**
*Weststraat 7*
*22789*
*7 am-5 pm*
*Inexpensive*
Fellow bagel addicts will be relieved to know that real New York-style bagels are available fresh every morning at Bon Bini bagels, just around the corner from the fruit market in Oranjestad. Sesame, onion, garlic, cinnamon raisin, poppy and plain bagels are fixed just the way you like them – plain or toasted, with butter, with jelly, with cream cheese or, the Cadillac of them all, with lox and cream cheese. University of Massachusetts graduates Josh Lavine and Mike Shelton studied the intricacies of bagel baking in bakeries in New York and New Jersey during summer vacations before venturing forth with Josh's dad Alan to open their own bakery on Aruba.

Bon Bini supplies many of the hotels and also offers free delivery if you call in your order by

8 am. The menu also features overstuffed bagel sandwiches, muffins and homemade soup.

## Sunup To Sundown

Many are those who come to Aruba planning to spend their days lazing on the beach or catching up on their reading. But, with so many other attractions vying for their attention, they're likely to return home with that bestseller still unread. Not far from their beach chair the crystal clear waters of the Caribbean beckon, offering ideal conditions for swimming, diving, windsurfing, sailing and a myriad of watersports.

Moving off the beach, championship golf is just a few miles away. Rare is the hotel that's without a tennis court. And if it's time for a break from Aruba's constant sunshine, they can experience the island's past in the museums of Oranjestad, explore Indian caves, or run amok amidst casinos and some of the finest shopping in the Caribbean.

## Beaches

*Don't forget the sunblock. Those cooling tradewinds make it easy to forget just how strong the sun really is.*

The divi-divi tree, with a beautiful white sandy beach against a clear blue sky and turquoise sea, is Aruba's signature. Of course those ever-present tradewinds are just as hard to forget. While the divi-divi is quirky and fun to look at, the beach is what you'll long for after you've returned home. You'll have no problem finding the seven-mile strip of Palm Beach, Eagle Beach et al. – a wide, palm-lined, sandy white beach that's in more

Caribbean brochures than you could ever hope to count. Chances are your hotel is on this stretch. But you shouldn't let perfection keep you from discovering the many smaller beaches scattered along the leeward coast or from admiring Aruba's rugged windward side.

## Beaches Along The Strip

There's no lack of creature comforts on the seven-mile strip of virtually perfect beach with gentle surf and fine white sand that starts at Punta Brabo, just north of Oranjestad. All of Aruba's hotels and water sports outfitters are located here. Most hotel facilities on the beach, including bars, restaurants and restrooms, are available to non-guests.

**Manchebo Beach:** Gentle surf and a broad expanse of powder white sand characterize this portion of the strip, starting at Punta Brabo and stretching between Druif Bay and Eagle Beach. The Manchebo Beach Resort is here. Topless bathing is permitted.

**Eagle Beach**: Gentle surf and endless miles of powdery white sand make this one of the most beautiful beaches of the Caribbean. Ideal for water sports; several outfitters are located here.

**Palm Beach:** As a symbol of the purity of their marriage, newlyweds sprinkle sand from Palm Beach on their threshold. Calm waters create ideal conditions for swimming.

**Arashi Beach:** The northernmost beach on the leeward coast, Arashi is located between the village of Malmok and the California Point. Calm, clear waters and gentle currents are optimal for snorkeling and diving. They make for great underwater visibility. This is an ideal shore dive for novices. Obviously, conditions are excellent for swimming too.

## Beaches South Of Oranjestad

*Special theme nights with music and dancing under the stars are also featured on the island.*

**De Palm Island:** As a consolation for those who aren't staying at the Sonesta, De Palm Tours operates its own island just off the coast, not far from the Spanish Lagoon. Coral formations and abundant marine life just offshore offer fine opportunities for snorkeling and diving. Guests can also explore the fascinating depths of the Caribbean aboard the ***Atlantis*** submarine. Also on the island are four restaurants/snack bars and plenty of beach-side hammocks. Transportation to and from your hotel is included. For more information,  24400.

*Most of the following beaches have a refreshment stand, but no comfort facilities.*

**Spanish Lagoon, Savaneta Beach and Commandeurs Baai:** The waters here are among the best on the island for diving and snorkeling. The beaches provide a lovely setting for a seaside picnic.

**Bachelor's Beach:** Also known as Boca Tabla, this, along with nearby **Boca Grandi**, is the favored hangout for experienced

windsurfers. The shallow lagoon nearby is ideal for swimming and snorkeling. It is known as the "Grapefield" because of the grape trees growing on the sand dunes there.

**Baby Beach:** Aptly named, Baby Beach is a favorite of families with young children. The calm, shallow waters (no more than four to five feet deep) and powder white sand are ideal for tots. Older kids will enjoy snorkeling in the small channel, which is loaded with beautiful coral heads. There is a refreshment stand but no facilities. Baby Beach is located on the southern point in the area known as Seroe Colorado.

**Rodgers Beach:** Popularly known as *Salina*, Rodger's Beach is west of the lagoon at Baby's Beach. The surf is slightly rougher, but conditions are still fine for swimming. Rodgers Beach also has a snack bar, but no changing facilities.

The dramatic beaches along the northern or windward coast, with their pounding surf and often rocky shores, are beautiful. However, even when the water seems relatively calm, discretion and the powerful undertow dictate that swimming be reserved for the southern coast. But you can still enjoy Aruba's northern beaches. Sand dune surfing is a favorite pastime at **Boca Prins**. Surfing is best done *sans* board in jeans and sneakers. **Dos Playa** nearby offers beautiful vistas. Set on a deep cove just below the Natural Bridge and not far from Rancho Daimari, the black stone **Andicuri Beach** is considered Aruba's most

beautiful secluded beach. It and **Boca Grandi**, in the area known as Grapefield, are the only beaches on the north coast that are safe for swimming.

## Diving

Though overshadowed by Aruba's other attractions, namely beaches and casinos, diving and snorkeling are certainly worthwhile here. The waters off Aruba are home to thousands of tropical fish in all the colors of the rainbow, including stingrays, eagle rays, yellowtail snappers, parrotfish, queen angelfish, groupers, horse eye jacks and a host of others. Aruba's reefs feature an endless variety of coral in all shapes and sizes, tube sponges, seafans, anemones and gorgonians. Wrecks make up a good portion of Aruba's dive sites. Included among them is the German freighter *Antilla*, the largest wreck in the Caribbean.

With water temperatures in the 80's and visibility averaging 100 feet, sometimes even 150 feet, the calm waters off the south or leeward coast are ideal for beginners. And since many dives are at depths of only 30-60 feet, novice divers won't feel cheated. Dives include the reef at Mangel Alto, located between Oranjestad and San Nicolas, known for its unusual coral formations and an abundance of colorful tropical fish; the waters off Baby Beach on the eastern part of island; Spanish Lagoon, Commandeurs Baai; and Malmok near the north coast. Only the most advanced

divers should attempt the rough waters of the north coast.

## Dive Operators

One of Aruba's most reputable dive operators is **Red Sail Sports**. They offer Discover Scuba Dive Courses, a full curriculum of PADI certification courses and specialty courses. One- and two-tank boat dives and night dives are offered aboard the 38-foot *Vista Mar,* which features a freshwater shower and spacious dive platform. Prices include tanks, weights, fruit and juices. Rental equipment is available. Red Sail Sports Centers are located at many of the major hotels, including Sonesta Island, the Americana, the Marriott and the Hyatt and downtown in the Seaport Marketplace. Advance reservations can be made through your travel agent or with Red Sail Sports directly ( 61603; in the U.S. 1-800-255-6425).

In addition to Aruba, Red Sail Sports Centers are located in the Bahamas, Grand Cayman, and Hawaii.

## Dive Sites

We've selected dive sites that are suitable for novice to intermediate divers as well as snorkelers and that are relatively easy to get to, either as shore or boat dives. It goes without saying that it is best to dive with an experienced dive operator. Travelling down the leeward coast starting at California Point, the following are among Aruba's most noteworthy dive sites:

### *CALIFORNIA* WRECK

*Boat dive*
*Advanced divers*

The rough waters off the northwest point make this dive suitable for advanced divers only. Located at a depth of 30-45 feet, large coral formations surround the wreck and there is no shortage of colorful fish.

### ARASHI REEF

*Shore dive*
*Beginners*
*Snorkeling*

Located just below the California Point. Calm waters and great visibility make the Arashi Reef an ideal shore dive for first timers and a great refresher for more experienced divers who haven't been out in a while. This garden of brain coral, large star corals, and sea fans is one of Aruba's loveliest.

### *ANTILLA* WRECK

*Boat dive*
*Beginner/advanced divers*
*Snorkelers*
*Excellent night dive*

Locally referred to as the "ghost ship," this German freighter is the largest wreck in the Caribbean and Aruba's most popular attraction. Partially exposed, it reaches a maximum depth of 54 feet and is thickly covered with sponges and coral. Giant tube sponges also grow here. Large compartments make it a fairly uncomplicated wreck dive and safe for beginners. Residents include snappers, angelfish, groupers, grunt fish, clams and lobsters.

**MALMOK REEF**
*Shore/boat dive*
*Beginner/advanced divers*
*Snorkelers*
Malmok Reef descends to a maximum depth of 70 feet. It's covered with colorful barrel sponges and brain and leaf corals. You'll spot plenty of stingrays and huge lobsters too.

**TUGBOAT WRECK**
*Boat dive*
*Intermediate/advanced divers*
The Tugboat is a favorite of underwater photographers. The drop-off starts at 40 feet and is covered with brain, star and sheet coral. The tugboat is on the bottom at 90 feet. Green moray eels and sting rays are its known inhabitants. Eagle rays pass through from time to time.

**KANTIL REEF**
*Boat dive*
*Intermediate/advanced divers*
Another much-photographed dive, the shelf starts at 40 feet and drops steeply to 110 feet. The shelf is covered with giant-sized brain corals as well as star, leaf and sheet coral. Plant life includes seafans and gorgonians. Yellowtail snappers, tiger groupers, moray eels, and manta rays make their home here. Eagle rays are occasionally seen in the area.

**DANTCHI'S DELIGHT**
*Boat dive*
*Beginners*
The slope, which ends at 100 feet, is covered with elkhorn coral in the shallower water and sponges as it descends. It is home to a diverse and fascinating population of moray eels,

snappers, and schools of horse eye jacks. If you're lucky, you may spot a sea turtle. This is another dive favored by underwater photographers.

**PLONCO REEF**
*Boat dive*
*Intermediate/advanced divers*
Just below Dantchi's Delight, the reef crests at 20 feet and descends to 100 feet. Giant corals predominate. This reef is home to a large population of green moray eels. Large lobsters may be seen here as well.

**SKALAHEIN**
*Boat/drift dive*
*Advanced divers*
The best drift dive site on Aruba, it slopes to a depth of 120 feet. Brain, star, fire and black coral cover the slope. Barracudas and manta rays are frequently in the area.

**MANGEL HALTO REEF**
*Boat dive*
*Advanced divers*
The reef slopes to 110 feet, ending in a magical garden of deep water gorgonians, sea anemones, and tube and vase sponges, tended by octopus, seahorses and yellow tails.

**BARCADERA REEF**
*Boat dive*
*Intermediate/advanced divers*
Sea fans and corals sway in the current at this lovely dive located off De Palm Island. The reef crests at 20 feet and drops to 80 feet.

**PUERTO CHIQUITO**
*Boat dive*
*Intermediate/advanced divers*
Nicknamed "snapper city." Manta rays also frequent this area, along with the occasional turtle. An incredible seascape of star, pillar, flower, fingerleaf and sheet corals make this one of Aruba's most memorable dives. It starts at 20 feet and reaches bottom at 80 feet.

**COMMANDEURS REEF**
*Intermediate/advanced divers*
*Boat/shore/drift dive*
A colorful assortment of fish, including French and queen angelfish, groupers, grunts and snappers gliding through the sheet and leaf corals on the slope, make this a beautiful dive. The reef is home to crab, lobster and squid. Runners and barracuda pass through occasionally.

***PEDERNALES* WRECK**
*Boat dive*
*Beginner/advanced divers*
*Snorkelers*
After being torpedoed by a German U-boat, this U.S. oil tanker managed to limp home to the refinery. There the center piece was cut out and the remaining fore and aft portions sealed together. The tanker went on to the Normandy Invasion. Groupers and angelfish swim around the center piece, which includes the remains of entire cabins. You'll find interesting coral formations here as well.

**BABY BEACH REEF**
*Shore dive*
*Beginners*
*Snorkelers*

An easy dive for beginners, the reef starts at 20 feet and gradually slopes to 60 feet. Elkhorn and sheet coral cover the slope, which is populated by crab, lobsters and squid.

## Dive Sites On The Northern Coast

Aruba's northern coast offers spectacular diving, which is best attempted only by the most advanced divers. Even then you should not attempt these dives on your own but go with an experienced dive master who is familiar with the site. Divers who brave the rough seas and strong currents to reach **Cabez Reef** will dive amidst numerous schools of barracuda, amberjacks, rainbow runners, sting rays and a host of other tropical fish. The dive at the **Natural Bridge** features fantastic black and soft corals and giant barrel sponges. Both dives are accessible from shore only.

## And For Non-Divers

Non-divers need not miss out on the wonders hidden beneath the Caribbean. They can experience the beauty of Aruba's marine life in air-conditioned comfort aboard the *Atlantis* submarine or the *Seaworld Explorer*.

### *ATLANTIS* SUBMARINE

*Seaport Village Marina*
*36090*

Passengers aboard the coastguard-approved *Atlantis* submarine descend to depths seen only by the most advanced divers. Approved to 150 feet, the *Atlantis* explores the fascinat-

ing sponge gardens and coral formations of the Barcadera Reef, including sights only found in deeper waters. There are 26 large viewports, each two feet in diameter, and an oversized 52-inch picture window in the front of the vessel. Expert narration identifying marine life and explaining the functioning of a living reef is provided throughout the hour-long voyage. The cabin is pressurized and air conditioned. During the two-hour tour passengers will experience Aruba from above and below the water. Starting at the Seaport Marina they'll board the catamaran *Dorado* and travel 30 minutes along the southeast coast to where the *Atlantis* is docked. All participants receive a certificate after completion of the dive. Reservations must be made in advance. Tickets are $64 for adults and $29 for children.

*The* Atlantis *has received Aruba's Artousa Award for the most outstanding tourist attraction and the International Incentive Quality Award for four consecutive years (1992-1995).*

### *SEAWORLD EXPLORER*

*% 62807*
*The Holiday Inn Pier*
*See your hotel activities desk for reservations*

If you're still not ready to don mask and fins and aren't comfortable with the idea of being totally submerged, the *Seaworld Explorer* is a wonderful alternative. More than just a glassbottom boat, this 49-foot semi-submarine was developed in Australia to investigate the Great Barrier Reef. Unlike a submarine, it does not submerge. Instead, passengers descend to the window-lined observatory in the vessel's hull, five feet below the surface. There, in air-conditioned comfort, they'll explore the fascinating coral formations and exotic marine life of the Arashi Reef and the

*Great for kids!*

German freighter *Antilla*, Aruba's most famous wreck. Tickets are $29.

## Sailing & Watersports

Aruba's constant tradewinds provide near-perfect conditions for sailing, both for beginners and experts. It goes without saying that the less experienced should stick to the leeward side, while experts will want to venture windward.

*For evening party cruises see After Dark*

### Board Sailing

One week out of every summer the waters off Aruba are awash in brightly colored sails as hundreds of board sailors from around the world compete in the annual Hi Winds Pro-Am Windsurfing Tournament. Part of the Professional Boardsailing Association's Grand Prix World Cup Tour since 1988, this week-long tournament features several different events, including the Jibe Slalom, the Speed Slalom, a Moonlight Race, and the killer 64-kilometer "Round the Isle" race, made all the more grueling by the rough wind and wave conditions on the windward side of the island. Since it is scheduled to coincide with optimal conditions as determined by a careful study of the moon, wind and tides, tournament dates vary every year. If you'd like to visit Aruba during the event, contact the Aruba Tourism Authority for schedule information.

*Write to the ATA at P.O. Box 1019 Oranjestad, Aruba. Or 297-8-23777; fax 34702.*

Needless to say, Aruba has become a mecca for serious (and not so serious) windsurfers,

who are attracted by the constant tradewinds, averaging between 18 and 27 knots, and the wide variety of locations and wave changes found throughout the island. Experienced sailors enjoy the challenging conditions at Bachelor's Beach and the slalom board area on Manchebo Beach. Fisherman's Hut Beach, with its shallow water and calm winds, provides the perfect environment for beginners.

Outfitters that specialize in windsurfing equipment rentals and instruction include: **Divi Winds Windsurfing & Watersports Center**, J.E. Irausquin Blvd. 47 on Eagle Beach between the Divi and Tamarijn Resorts ( 24150, ext. 623); **Roger's Windsurf Place**, L.G. Smith Blvd. 472 in Malmok ( 61918); and **Sailboard Vacations**, Windsurf Village, L.G. Smith Blvd. 462 ( 61072). Most major watersports centers offer rentals and instruction.

## Sailing Trips

There is no shortage of sailing trips and you can choose from a variety of vessels. Except for dinner and sunset cruises, most include stops at favorite snorkeling sites, such as the wreck of the *Antilla*. Snorkel equipment as well as refreshments and/or buffet or barbecue lunches are provided. Sites visited and departure times usually vary by day. Most operators require that you reserve a day in advance. **Red Sail Sports** ( 61603) offers a variety of different cruises, ranging from a Morning Snorkel Buffet Sail to a Starlight

*Balia means "to dance" in Papiamentu.*

Sail aboard ***Balia***, a 53-foot racing catamaran. Most mornings at 10 am the 78-foot classic sailing yacht ***Mi Dushi*** ( 28919/23513) departs from the Aruba Palm Beach Resort Pier headed for the wreck of the *Antilla*. *Mi Dushi* also offers a sundown Snorkel Safari featuring snorkeling, calypso music and an open bar a few nights a week.

Morning departures aboard the ***Octopus*** start with mimosas and homemade baked goods, followed by two snorkeling stops and a buffet lunch. The *Octopus* also offers daily afternoon sails and two sunset sails a week. Reservations can only be made by calling 33081 between 8 am and 9 pm. On a Snorkeling Sail aboard the 42-foot trimaran ***Sea Venture***, you'll experience three different types of sites with stops at the Arashi elkhorn reef, Boca Catalina sponge reef and the wreck of the *Antilla*. Contact De Palm Tours for reservations ( 24400).

You and no more than 14 other guests will enjoy a day of luxury aboard the ***S.Y. Wyvern II***, a 54-foot sailing yacht with teak deckings and beautiful interior. Substantially more expensive than other cruises, their day-cruise includes open bar service, gourmet lunch, and the use of snorkel, scuba and fishing equipment. Private day- and week-long charters to Bonaire and Curaçao are available. The *Wyvern II* docks at the Seaport Marina, where you can meet Captain Gerard Van Erp and his crew evenings from 6 pm to 8 pm. For more information and reservations, 930032.

## Weddings At Sea Aboard The Wyvern II

Captain Gerard van Erp will perform a civil wedding in the waters outside Aruban territory. Both bride and groom must have a valid passport and be over 18 years of age. Following the ceremony Captain van Erp will provide the couple with a wedding certificate and a copy of the ship's registration. Upon returning home, the couple must register the certificate with the proper authorities. Since requirements concerning the legalization of wedding documents issued by the captain of a seagoing vessel in international waters vary by jurisdiction, you should check on such regulations prior to making arrangements with Captain van Erp. For more information, contact Aruba Marine Services N.V., Seaport Marketplace #204, P.O. Box 4104 Aruba. Attention: Captain Gerard van Erp. Or 297-8-39190; or fax 297-8-39197.

*Civil weddings will only be performed in Aruba itself if one of the partners is a resident of Aruba.*

## The Aruba Catamaran Regatta

Aruba's Catamaran Regatta is the largest regatta of light beachcraft in the Caribbean. Every November since 1991 Aruba has hosted this colorful, week-long event in which over 50 avid sailors from Europe, primarily Holland, followed by Belgium, Germany and Austria, compete in Hobie Cats, Prindles, Nacras, Darts and Olympic Torpedoes. Ruud Reij, a former catamaran racer from Holland, originated the event after he recognized that Aruba offered optimal conditions for racing. The constant winds and smooth waters off the leeward coast are ideal for catamarans, and

Aruba's fine sandy beaches offer easy launching and soft landing.

Since races take place close to shore on Palm Beach, there's no need for binoculars. Lucky spectators can board the VIP boat for an even closer view.

You don't have to be a participant, or even know one, to enjoy the regatta. For some, the best part of each day's events is the daily happy hour on Palm Beach where the Regatta is held. Do a good job mingling and you should find yourself with invitations to many of the parties held during the week.

## Deep Sea Fishing

An extensive list of fish, including Atlantic gamefish, populate the waters just eight to 10 miles offshore heading toward Venezuela. While you're almost guaranteed a catch, you will definitely have a good fight. It's been said that fish off the coast of Aruba are fatter and stronger than most since they're able to feed better. You'll find blue marlin in the deep waters off the north coast. Heading toward Venezuela you'll fish for barracuda, bonito, mahi mahi (known locally as dorado), kingfish, sailfish, shark, tarpon, tuna, wahoo and red snapper.

*Clean water and no overfishing produce an abundant food supply.*

A number of captains offer full- and half-day charters, with tackle, bait, food and refreshments usually included in their rate. Your hotel activities desk should be able to make

arrangements for you, or contact Pelican Tours ( 31228/24739 or fax 32655).

## Watersports Galore

The calm waters off Eagle and Palm Beach are ideal for all types of watersports. Outfitters along the beach offer everything from Hobie Cats and Sunfish to kayaks and paddleboats, tube and banana boat rides, or the basic water mattress. Most beachfront hotels have their own watersports center. If not, try **Red Sail Sports** on Palm Beach or the **Pelican Watersports Center** on the beach at the Holiday Inn Hotel.

## Activities On Dry Land

### Golf

As any true golfer will tell you, it never rains on the golf course. That's practically true on Aruba.

With temperatures in the low 80's and very few, if any, rainy days, conditions could not be any better for golf than they are on Aruba, though some may object to the constant tradewinds. The opening of the **Tierra del Sol Golf Course** in 1995 has made Aruba an ideal destination for those planning a golf vacation.

The 18-hole, par-71 championship course was designed by the firm of Robert Trent Jones Jr., whose skillful design is equaled only by his commitment to land preservation and en-

hancement. The course is bordered by water on two sides with spectacular Caribbean views and desert vistas at every hole. The highest green is 98 feet above sea level. With multiple tees to accommodate varying levels of play from professional to 30 handicap, the course will challenge even the most accomplished golfer without completely frustrating determined beginners.

Ingeniously designed to maximize the unusual topography of Aruba's northwest tip, giant native cactuses, the divi-divi, rock formations, clusters of natural grasses and flora have been carefully incorporated into the landscape. In the planning stages, environmentalists were consulted to ensure the preservation of natural wildlife, including the construction of an irrigation system in such a manner as not to disturb a bird sanctuary. Thanks to the irrigation system, the course functions independently from the island's water supply. Surprisingly lush fairways are juxtaposed against a desert landscape. At one point the course was redesigned so as not to disturb the habitat of the rare burrowing owl, which lives in ancient caves in the coral rock not far from the sixth green. The fifth fairway runs alongside a saltwater marsh inhabited by wild egrets.

The course is the centerpiece of a luxurious country club-style community featuring low-rise residential estates, a health club, two swimming pools, eight tennis courts, and a clubhouse that is home to the pro shop and the spectacular Ventanas del Mar restau-

rant. Facilities also include a driving range, putting green, and a separate chipping area with sand traps. Tee times can be arranged through your hotel activities desk, or call the proshop directly at 67800. Equipment rentals are available. Greens fees are $115 before 3 pm and $75 after.

A less pricey option is the "nine-hole course" at the Aruba Golf Club in San Nicolas. The uniquely designed course includes 20 sand traps, five water hazards, and 10 greens, to allow for 18-hole play. Greens are oiled sand and goats are among the hazards you'll encounter. Additional facilities include men's and women's locker rooms with showers and lockers, a clubhouse with a bar, and a practice green and driving range. Equipment is available for rent. Greens fees, including caddie, are under $30 for 18 holes. For starting times and further information, contact the Aruba Golf Club on Golfweg in San Nicolas ( 42006).

Located behind La Cabana Beach Resort & Casino is **Joe Mendez Miniature Adventure Golf** (Sasakiweg, 76625), an elevated 18-hole miniature golf course surrounded by water. Paddle boats and bumper boats are also available for rent. Open 4 pm to 11 pm.

### Tennis

To avoid the blazing midday sun, tennis is best played in the early morning or late afternoon and evening. Most hotels have their own courts and often offer equipment rentals and instruction as well. Non-hotel guests are usu-

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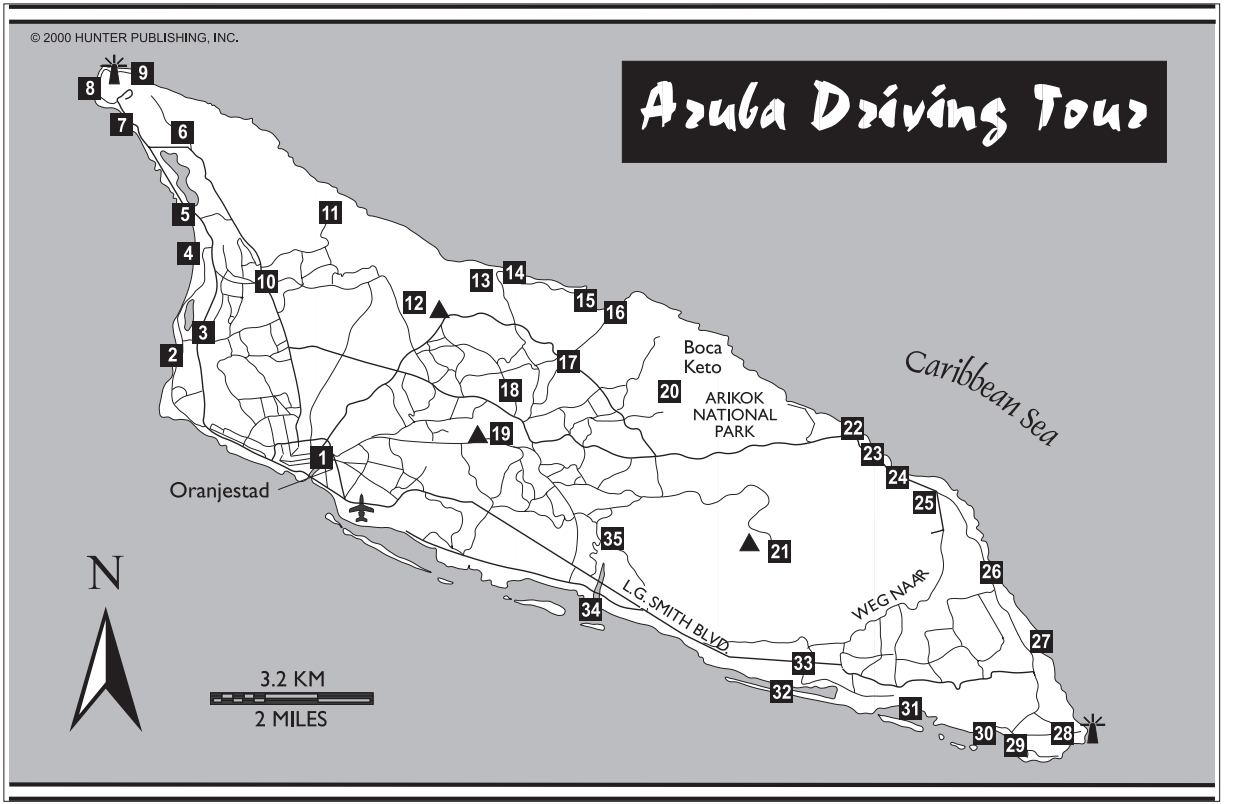

ally permitted use of the courts for a fee, though hotel guests have priority.

Aruba also boasts its own world-class tennis center. Designed by Stan Smith Design International and Aruba's SHS Design, the **Aruba Racquet Club** has eight lighted courts, an exhibition center court, pro-shop, swimming pool, fitness center offering aerobics classes, and a bar/restaurant. Open from 8 am to 9 pm, the Racquet Club is located in the Palm Beach area at Rooi Santo 21. Call ahead for reservations ( 60215).

## Horseback Riding

A fitting way to experience Aruba's desert landscape is on horseback, especially when

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### Aruba Driving Tour

**Leeward Coast Heading North**

1. Oranjestad
2. Eagle Beach
3. Bubali Bird Sanctuary
4. Palm Beach
5. Fisherman's Hut (windsurfing)
6. Malmok
7. Arashi Beach (great snorkeling)
8. Cudarebe Point
9. California Lighthouse and Dunes; Tierra del Sol Golf Course

**Heading South from the Point**

10. Church of Santa Ana
11. Chapel of Alto Vista
12. Seroe Plat (Crystal Mountain)
13. Bushiribana
14. Boca Mahos
15. Natural bridge
16. Andicuri Beach
17. Ayo (rock formation)
18. Casibari (rock formation)
19. Hooiberg (Haystack Mountain/ scenic viewpoint)
20. Arikok Nat'l Park/Boca Keitu
21. Jamanota Hill (highest point)
22. Boca Prins/sand dunes
23. Fontein (Indian caves)
24. Guadirikiri (Indian caves)
25. Huliba Cave and the Tunnel of Love
26. Boca Grandi
27. Bachelor's Beach
28. Punta Basora/Colorado Point Lighthouse (SE point of island)

**Heading Up the Southern Coast toward Oranjestad**

29. Baby Beach
30. Rodgers Beach
31. San Nicolas
32. Commanders Bay
33. Savaneta
34. Spanish Lagoon
35. Frenchman's Pass

your ride takes you through Arikok National Park for a refreshing swim in the natural pool. **Rancho Del Campo** ( 20290) and **Rancho Daimari** ( 60239) offer just that. Beginning and experienced riders are welcome. **Rancho El Paso** offers comfortable country and beach rides on paso fino horses, which are known for their smooth gait ( 73310). All three ranches provide transportation to and from your hotel. The cost is reasonable.

### Bowling

Bowling is popular and quite competitive on Aruba. In fact, local teams are often invited to compete internationally.

The **Eagle Bowling Palace** on Pos Abou ( 35038) has 12 lanes, all of which are completely computerized.

### Parasailing

Parasailing is an exhilarating way to get a bird's eye view of Aruba. Several operators offer it, including **Pelican Tours (**% 31228) and **Red Sail Sports** ( 61603). Both are on Palm Beach.

## Touring The Island

Like many of your fellow guests, when you arrive on Aruba you'll check into your hotel, drop your luggage in your room, and step out onto the beach, thinking to yourself, "When

you've found paradise, why leave?" That seven-mile strip of perfect beach makes it all too easy to forget that Aruba is an entire island. You owe it to yourself to slip away for at least a morning and explore the rest, much of which is nothing like the beach you're standing on.

More akin to the American Southwest, Aruba's desert-like landscape has little in common with the lush tropical foliage and rainforests you'll find on the islands of the northern Caribbean. Instead, its countryside, known as the *cunucu*, is a fascinating world of aloe fields, abandoned gold mines, grotesque rock formations and mysterious Indian caves.

You'll drive past lovely cottages in the countryside, painted with colorful decorations. Those patterns are not mere ornamentation, but hex designs with ancient superstitious meanings. Just like the hex designs of the Pennsylvania Dutch, they are carryovers from the earliest settlers who used them to protect their homes from misfortune. Be sure to keep a lookout for wild donkeys or goats; they often venture out into the road, oblivious to the oncoming traffic.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

Snorkeling at Arashi Beach

A seaside picnic at Andicuri

A refreshing swim in the Natural Pool at Boca

Keitu

The view from the top of Jamanota Hill

A cold Amstel at Charlie's Bar

**GETTING READY**
The drive can easily be completed in a morning, but you may want to pack a picnic lunch and make a day of it. Snorkelers and divers should pack their gear since several of the best shore dives are along this route. You may be doing a lot of walking and possibly some hiking in the national park, so sneakers or sturdy sandals are a good idea. As always, be sure to bring plenty of water and sunscreen, as well as a hat.

Heading north out of Oranjestad on the coastal road, you'll travel along Aruba's seven-mile strip of wide white beach, the first portion of which is Punta Brabo on Druif Bay, before coming to the resorts on Eagle Beach. Across from the Wyndham Hotel is the **Bubali Bird Sanctuary**, where hundreds of migrating birds stop to rest during their annual trek between the Americas. The sanctuary has a working windmill. Back on the coastal road, you'll continue along the sandy expanse, which underwent a second name change at the Wyndham Hotel, and is now **Palm Beach**. Just beyond Palm Beach is the area known as **Fisherman's Hut** or **Hadikurari**. Shallow waters make this one of the world's most popular places for windsurfing. The next section of beach is **Malmok**, where several years ago an archaeological dig unearthed a fascinating assortment of ancient Indian artifacts – artwork, burial jars, pottery and utensils.

*Malmok is also the name of the village across from the beach.*

In the distance across the Caribbean you may see part of the hull of the **German Freighter *Antilla***. Scuttled at the outbreak of the Sec-

ond World War, it is the largest wreck in the Caribbean and one of Aruba's most popular dive sites. Snorkelers and divers should set aside an hour or two for **Arashi Beach**. Gentle currents, fantastic visibility and a spectacular assortment of colorful corals and tropical fish have made it a favorite of snorkelers and novice divers.

*Warning: Only advanced divers should attempt this wreck due to the strong currents and choppy waters.*

As you near the turnoff to the northern coast, it should become readily apparent that rocky shores and wild surf have replaced the wide beaches and gentle seas of the southern coast. A lovely vista of high sand dunes set against the green fairways of the **Tierra del Sol Golf Course** and a distant lighthouse announce your arrival at the northwest point of the island, **Cudarebe Point**. The dunes and lighthouse are named **California** after the *SS California*, which sank offshore here in 15-30 feet of water. Many would agree that the *California* deserved its fate, since it received and apparently never responded to the *SS Titanic* distress signal nine years prior to its own demise. The wreck of the *California* remains in its final resting place.

*Fairly distant from shore, it is accessible by boat only. Caveat: Do not attempt to swim out to the wreck.*

The par-71 18-hole championship **Tierra del Sol** golf course is the centerpiece of Aruba's first master-planned community. It features low-rise residential estates, a health club, two swimming pools and eight tennis courts. The **Ventanas del Mar** restaurant in the clubhouse offers panoramic views of the back nine and Caribbean.

*Ventanas del Mar would be a lovely place to stop for lunch or a drink. Appropriate dress is required. See Dining, page 69, for more information.*

Follow the inland road through the scrubby *cunucu* or countryside to the **Church of Santa Ana** (in Noord). Its elaborately carved oak altar, dating back to 1850, is the work of the Dutch artist Van Geld. It is an excellent example of neo-gothic design and won an award in Rome in 1870. Another small road climbs to the **Chapel of Alto Vista**, a popular destination for those seeking peace and contemplation. Located on the rocks that tower above the windward coast, it was built by Aruba's first Spanish missionary, Domingo Antonio Silvestre, in 1750. Popularly referred to as the Pilgrim's Church, it is a pilgrimage church. The stations of the cross are marked on the winding road that leads to it.

Heading east towards the windward coast, you'll reach **Seroe Plat**, Crystal Mountain or *Kristal Berg* in Dutch, which offers yet another scenic view. Abandoned gold mines are also in this area. Continuing to the coast, you'll reach the ruins of the gold smelter at **Bushiribana** which, as most visitors agree, looks very much like a pirate's fort. Travel the rugged north shore to **The Natural Bridge**, the largest of eight such coral formations on the island where the sea has battered the rocky cliff to form a bridge. It measures 100 feet long and is 23 feet above sea level, making it the highest coral formation in the Caribbean. The Natural Bridge is between **Boca Mahos** and **Andicuri Beach**, a black stone beach on a deep sandy cove. Andicuri is a fine setting for a seaside picnic and one of the few places on the north coast which is safe enough

for swimming. Not far from here is **Rancho Daimari.** Dating back to the 17th century, it was one of the earliest coconut plantations in the Caribbean. The ranch's current owners raise international champion paso fino horses. Not too long ago they opened the ranch to the public and now offer trail rides through Arikok National Park with a stop at the Natural Pool. They also operate a small bed and breakfast.

Double-back to the inland road and then continue along it to the grotesque-looking diorite rock formations at **Ayo** and then **Casibari**. The remains of Indian rock drawings are still visible at both. Climb the stone steps at Casibari for a panoramic view of the island. Sunday afternoons feature live Aruban folkloric music at the Casibari Snack Shack from 11 am to 3:30 pm.

*Casibari has been called a mythological giant's playground.*

Just beyond Casibari is the **Hooiberg**, a cone-shaped, 541-foot volcanic rock formation located at the center of the island. On a clear day you can see the Venezuelan coast from the top. After a rainfall, the Hooiberg will be suddenly covered with the brilliant yellow flowers of the kibra hasha. Also at the Hooiberg is an Indian rock garden, tropical birds and a small island museum.

*Hooiberg means "haystack mountain."*

From the Hooiberg head towards the **Arikok National Park**. Hikers and naturalists will want to spend time in this 2,350-acre national park, which was founded by the Netherlands Antilles National Park Foundation or STINAPA in 1972. Marked hiking trails and

scattered winding paths lead to Indian caves complete with hieroglyphics and a typical island cottage or *cunucu,* as it is called in Papiamentu. If you prefer riding to hiking, arrange for a horseback tour of the park at **Rancho del Campo** or **Rancho Daimari**. A must while you're in the park is the drive or hike through the lunar landscape enroute to a refreshing swim in the natural pool at **Boca Keitu**.

After leaving the park, get on the road leading back toward the windward coast. For the best view of the island, take a detour to **Jamanota Hill.** At 617 feet, it is the highest hill on Aruba. Luckily, you can drive all the way to the top. The road to the coast leads to the small inlet known as **Boca Prins**, where the pounding surf has created the bridge formation known as "Dragon Mouth." Though the water is too rough for swimming, many come to this beach, known as **Playa Prins**, to slide down the dunes.

Just south is a series of caves. The first, **Fontein** contains ancient Indian drawings on its ceilings. Aruba's only freshwater well is at the Chinese garden nearby. This is one of the only places on the island where fresh vegetables are grown. Next enroute is **Guadirikiri**, a large network of caves inhabited by bats. The sections closest to the entrance are illuminated by natural skylights. **Huliba Cave** and the underground passage known as **The Tunnel of Love** should be your next stop. Continuing along the coast, you'll come to **Boca Grandi** and **Bachelor's**

*Most fruits and vegetables are imported from Venezuela.*

**Beach** just beyond it. This is the favored area of experienced windsurfers.

*Watch for wild donkeys as you drive along.*

Before reaching the turnoff to the southern coast you'll pass another natural bridge, where just a short distance away the waves have also beaten a cave out of the rocky coastline. Then at **Punta Basora**, the easternmost point of the island, the road turns onto the southern coast. Your landmark here is the **Colorado Point Lighthouse**. Before reaching San Nicolas you'll pass **Baby Beach** and **Rodger's Beach**. Continue towards **San Nicolas** on the southeastern shore. Aruba's largest town, it grew up around the opening of the oil refinery in 1924. Workers from 56 countries came and many remained, giving the area its international flavor and decidely Latin spirit. It is famous as the home of Charlie's Bar.

Heading back toward Oranjestad on the leeward coast, you'll pass the Savaneta Beach and picnic area. Most of Aruba's fishermen live and work in this area, leaving from the Savaneta Beach. Inland are the Savaneta Wetlands, an abandoned saltpan that now serves as a bird refuge. There are mangroves in this area as well. A little further up you'll cross the **Spanish Lagoon** which, now home to the island's electricity and desalinization plant, was once a pirate hideout. On the northwest edge of the lagoon is **Frenchman's Pass**, a narrow canyon populated by parakeets and egrets. It was here in 1700 that the Arawak Indians successfully defended Aruba against a French invasion in 1700.

*Several of the island's finest dive sites are in the area of Spanish Lagoon.*

Also nearby are the ruins of the **Balashi Gold Smelter**, dating back to 1899. Continuing northwards past the industrial harbor at Barcadera, you'll soon be back in Oranjestad.

## Sightseeing In Oranjestad

Though the terrific shopping on Caya Croes and in the malls along the waterfront may be what initially draws you to Oranjestad, take the time to explore the places in between. Be sure to visit the colorful fruit and vegetable market on the wharf. Then, as you make your way from the Seaport Village to Caya Croes (or vice-versa), stroll down Wilhelminastraat, a showplace of colorful colonial architecture. Enroute, you may also want to visit some of Oranjestad's historic buildings and museums.

### FORT ZOUTMAN & THE WILLEM III TOWER

*Oranjestraat*
*26099*
*Museum hours: Monday-Friday, 9 am to 12 noon; 1:30 to 4:30 pm*

Completed in 1796, Fort Zoutman is Aruba's oldest building. It was named in honor of Rear Admiral Johan Arnold Zoutman. A champion of the Dutch-English wars, he outmaneuvered the British on the North Sea during the Fourth British War. The fort was originally built to defend against the pirates in the then booming Paardenbaai Harbor. In those days, the fort was equipped with four cannons and it was located on what was then the shoreline.

From 1816 until 1911, the fort was home to government offices, which are now across the street. The Willem III tower was added to the Fort in 1868 to serve as Oranjestad's first public time keeper and light house. Its kerosene lamp was first lit in 1869 on the occasion of King Willem's birthday. At other times, Fort Zoutman contained a police department and a prison. Today it's home to the **Museo Arubano**. The museum's collection is made up of artifacts, furniture, clothing and assorted memorabilia of the island's past collected by volunteers who combed the island seeking donations from other residents.

On Tuesday nights, Fort Zoutman hosts the **Bon Bini Festival** from 6:30 to 8:30, a celebration of local music, food, folkloric dance and crafts by Aruban artisans. Festival proceeds are donated to local charities.

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM

*Zoutmanstraat 1*
*28979*
*Monday-Friday, 8 am to 12 noon; 1:30 to 4:30 pm*
The lifestyles of Aruba's early Indian settlers are explored in a permanent exhibit of artifacts and pottery collected at archaeological digs throughout the island. The collection even includes a mummified Indian in a burial urn.

### PROTESTANT CHURCH

*Wilhelminastraat*
Located behind the Archaeological Museum, this lovely church was built in 1846. Its suc-

cessor has been built right alongside it. The church contains a small Bible museum, which is open during the week from 10 am to noon.

**QUEEN WILHELMINA PARK**
*L.G. Smith Blvd.*
This area of greenery alongside the Seaport Marketplace was just a patch of sand until the green-thumbed developers of the Seaport Village rehabilitated it. Now it is a lovely seaside park with a statue of the former Dutch Queen Wilhemina at its center.

**NUMISMATIC MUSEUM**
*Zuidstratt #27*
*% 28831*
*Monday-Friday, 9 am to noon; 2 pm to 4:30 pm*
Located behind the police station one block east of Fort Zoutman, this small museum houses a world-class collection of coin and paper currency with over 30,000 pieces from 100 countries.

**THE ADRIAN DE MAN SHELL COLLECTION**
*Morgenster 18*
*24246*
Island visitors are invited to view this private shell collection, which fills an entire room in the rear of the De Man family's home. The collection includes a rare murex. Advance notice is requested.

**EQUESTRIAN STATUE OF SIMON BOLIVAR**
Presented to the people of Aruba by the government of Venezuela, this statue of the Liberator stands in front of the Bolivar Center in

Oranjestad behind the Talk of the Town Hotel.

**SAN NICOLAS**

Often referred to as Aruba's Sunrise Side, San Nicolas is located not far from the southeastern point of the island, 12 miles from Oranjestad. Though it grew up around the Lago Oil refinery, the island's second largest town is now dependent on tourism for its livelihood just like the rest of the island. A portion of its main street is now a fine promenade with local handicrafts and art sold from kiosks, as well as drink and refreshment stands. In contrast to Oranjestad, San Nicolas is decidedly more Latin American than Dutch. **Charlie's Bar**, a holdover from the refinery days, is San Nicolas' and Aruba's most famous watering hole.

*Noticeably absent in San Nicolas is the Dutch-style architecture that characterizes Oranjestad.*

Nearby attractions include Baby Beach and Rodger's Beach, Boca Grandi Beach for windsurfing, the Aruba Golf Course, Guadirikiri Cave and Fontein Cave, with their Indian inscriptions, and the Huliba and Tunnel of Love Caves.

On Friday evenings, May through October, San Nicolas hosts the **San Nifete**, a Caribbean street festival celebrating the heritage of San Nicolas with colorful talent and fashion shows, expositions, live talk shows, basketball competitions, fairs and lots of local fare to whet your appetite. The last Friday of the month the feature is a Street Art Gallery with Caribbean artists and musicians. The

festival is held on Main Street from 6:30 to 10 pm.

## Trips To Curaçao, Bonaire & Venezuela

Bonaire and Curaçao are just a day trip away. Since ALM offers several daily flights to Bonaire and Curaçao, you can easily organize a day on either island by studying the relevant chapters in this guide.

Caracas, Venezuela is also less than an hour away via Avensa Airlines. However, if you'd like to spend just a day or two in Caracas we urge you to make the most of your time by taking advantage of an organized tour offered by De Palm Tours. For more information see the De Palm Activities Desk in your hotel or contact the main office at 24400.

# Bonaire

Diving is and always will be what attracts most visitors to Bonaire. As a result, the casinos, nightclubs and shopping complexes of Aruba and Curaçao are noticeably absent. Though you won't find swank nightclubs, you will find several fine restaurants, friendly people and great diving. The atmosphere is definitely laid-back and, since everyone is on the island for the same thing, the camaraderie is instant. By sunset happy hour you'll be swapping stories and making plans for the next day's dive with the people you met on the boat just a few hours earlier.

But don't plan on spending all your time underwater. Bonaire ranks among the top birdwatching islands in the Caribbean, both on dry land and in mangroves, which you can explore via sea kayak. Conditions for windsurfing couldn't be better, and you'll want to explore the Washington-Slagbaai National Park, and bike to Pekelmeer, one of the largest flamingo sanctuaries in the Western Hemisphere.

## Island History

When Italian navigator Amerigo Vespucci discovered Bonaire in 1499, the island was inhabited by Arawak Indians. In fact, the word "Bonaire" is rooted in the Arawak word *bojnaj,* which means low country.

Twenty-eight years later, in 1527, the Spaniards began their attempt to colonize the island. A century later, having abandoned any hopes for success, the Spanish left Bonaire, taking with them Arawak Indians to sell into slavery on Hispaniola.

In 1664, a year after the departure of the Spanish, the Dutch invaded Curaçao, using the island as a naval base in their war against Spain. They subsequently occupied Bonaire and the neighboring islands as well. Two years later, in 1636, Bonaire officially became a Dutch colony.

Shortly thereafter, in 1639, the Dutch West India Company drew up a plan for the economic development of Bonaire, focusing primarily on salt production, the cultivation of corn and stock breeding. Salt production became the island's primary source of revenue and slaves were brought in from Africa and nearby islands to work in the saltpans.

Though the 18th century passed quietly, between 1800 and 1816 Bonaire was frequently attacked by French and British pirates. Sometime during this period the British occupied the island but, not knowing what to do with it, leased it to a New York merchant for $2,400 a year. Finally, in 1816 the Dutch regained control of Bonaire and, in addition to working the saltpans, established a system of government plantations to cultivate brasilwood, aloe and cochenille. However, once slavery was abolished in 1863, the plantations were no longer profitable. The island

was parceled out and sold. Bonaire's economy fell into a deep recession until 1926, when the oil industry began to boom on Aruba and Curaçao. Thousands of Bonairean men migrated to the sister islands to work in the oil refineries, mailing money home to their families, who remained on Bonaire. This period, which would become known as the "era of the money order economy," lasted until the late 1950's, when the automation of the oil industry eliminated many of the jobs the Bonaireans had left home for.

Luckily, just as automation had done away with jobs in the oil industry, the arrival of tourism created new ones. Bonaire's first hotel, the Flamingo Beach Club, opened in 1951. Then, when the Netherlands Antilles were granted autonomy by the Dutch government in 1954, Bonaire was granted funds to improve its economy. The saltpans were modernized to use solar energy, making the saltworks one of the most environmentally conscious plants in the world. An enlarged power plant and new airport were built in order to accommodate building contracts from outside Bonaire.

The Bonaire Petroleum Corporation (BOPEC) was founded in 1975. It constructed, not a refinery, but a terminal that would receive oil for transfer from giant tankers to smaller ones for transportation to Venezuela and other countries. Hence, the risk that the oil industry might affect marine life or the environment is not as great on Bonaire as it is elsewhere. In fact, Bonaire was the

first of the Antilles to enact legislation governing both land and sea to create a national park. To preserve Bonaire's cultural heritage, a non-profit foundation, the "Fundashon Arte Bonairiano," was established to train young people in traditional crafts.

However, Bonaire's number one industry is tourism and diving is its top attraction. This brings us to the pivotal event in the island's history, the arrival of Captain Don Steward in 1962 aboard the *Valerie Queen*, a 70-foot schooner out of San Francisco. Sailing into Kralendijk, Captain Don took one look at Bonaire's crystalline waters and coral shores and recognized its potential as a haven for divers. With one eye on promoting Bonaire as a diver's island and the other on conservation, Captain Don stayed on Bonaire and became actively involved in the island's development.

First, he took over the operation of Bonaire's sole hotel, where he would eventually found the island's first resort dive shop. Together, the hotel and dive shop would eventually blossom into Captain Don's Habitat, one of the foremost dive resorts in the Caribbean. Then Captain Don set an example for the world to follow, spearheading efforts to protect the marine life surrounding Bonaire by developing community and visitor educational programs designed to increase awareness of the reefs and the fragility of their ecosystems. Among his many contributions are Bonaire's first YMCA diving school, its first sport diving station, its first PADI five-star training facility, its first PADI

Diving Instructor Institute and the foundation of the Council of Underwater Resort Operators, with a training center.

Thanks to Captain Don's efforts, Bonaire is not only one of the world's finest diving destinations but a world leader in underwater conservation. Though Captain Don has since taken a step back from diving and has moved on to the landscape business, the sea will always be his first love. You can join him on Tuesday nights at Captain Don's Habitat for a slide show and storytelling.

## The Government

As part of the Netherlands Antilles, which is administered by a parliamentary democracy, most of Bonaire's affairs fall under the jurisdiction of its governing bodies, while defense and foreign affairs are handled by the Dutch government in the Hague. Bonaire's internal affairs are administered by the popularly elected Island Council, which carries out both executive and legislative functions. Bonaire's Lieutenant Governor is appointed by the Queen of the Netherlands and resides in Kralendijk.

## The People

Bonaire's 13,600 residents are exceedingly warm and hospitable. Descendents of the African slaves, Arawak and other native Caribbean peoples, as well as Dutch and Spanish settlers, their mixed ancestry is a reflection of the island's history.

## Festivals & Holidays

Special events and festivals on Bonaire center around the sea and island folklore. When competition is involved, jovial camaraderie comes before rivalry, with friendship and fun always in the lead.

### Annual Events

**Mascarade:** During the week between New Year's Day and Twelfth Night, costumed residents parade through the streets accompanied by a musical group.

**Carnival:** Glittering costumes, gaily decorated floats, and music and dance fill the streets of Kralendijk and Rincon during Carnival week. A week of non-stop merrymaking held in February or March, Bonaire's Carnival is modeled after those of Curaçao and Aruba, with children's parades, Grand Parades over the weekend, and the Burning of the Rey Momo Tuesday at midnight, before Ash Wednesday signals the start of Lent. And, so no one misses a moment of fun, events in Rincon and Kralendijk are scheduled a day apart.

**International Fishing Tournament:** Held every March, this popular event draws boats from neighboring islands, Venezuela and beyond.

**Simadan:** Those visiting Bonaire during Simadan experience an integral part of Bonaire's heritage. Traditionally, Bonaire's harvest season lasted from February through

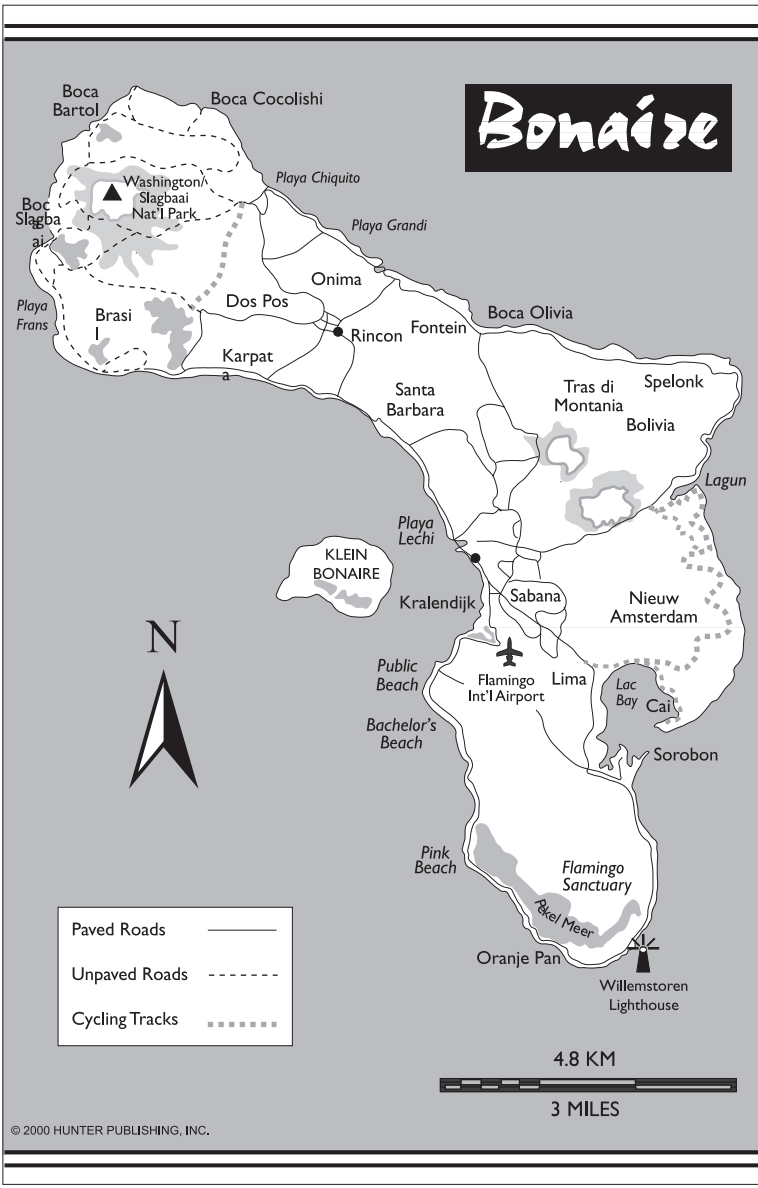
the end of April, during which time the entire community would pitch in to help the local *kunucu* or plantation owners harvest their sorghum crops. The completion of each harvest would be celebrated with a feast. Unique to the harvest was the music and dance of Simadan, including "wapa," a dance symbolizing the coming together of the community at harvest time.

Once all the harvests were finished, the *kunuku* owners would parade to Rincon. They would baskets of sorghum seeds to be deposited in the *Magasina di Rey,* the storehouse for the community. Finally, on Easter Sunday, the *kunuku* owners would bring sorghum seeds to the priest, who would then bless the harvest. Simadan festivals are still held in Rincon and Nikiboko.

**Family Month:** Throughout the entire month of August, special family packages and activities are offered by island resorts, restaurants and tour operators.

**The Bonaire Regatta:** Who would have thought that an impromptu race between Captain Don Steward's fishing sloop *Sislin* and Hubert Domacasse's *Vella* for a bounty of 27 cases of beer would give rise to one of the biggest events on Bonaire?

Every October sailing vessels ranging from yachts and catamarans to windsurfers, Sunfish and Bonairean fishing sloops compete in this festive five-day event, which attracts



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participants from neighboring islands, the United States, Venezuela and Holland.

For more information concerning these and other events held on Bonaire, contact the Bonaire Tourism Authority.

### National Holidays

Banks, the post office and government offices will be closed on these days. Many shops and restaurants may also close.

| | |
|---|---|
| New Years Day<br>January 1 | |
| Carnival Monday | Monday before Ash Wednesday |
| Good Friday | |
| Easter Monday | |
| Queen's Birthday/Rincon Day | April 30 |
| Labor Day | May 1 |
| Ascension Day | May (varies) |
| National Anthem & Flag Day | September 6 |
| Christmas Day<br>December 25 | |
| Boxing Day | December 26 |

## Location & Getting There

Bonaire is in the southern Caribbean, 50 miles north of Venezuela, 30 miles east of Curaçao, 86 miles east of Aruba and 1,720 miles from New York. At 12°5' north and 68°25' west longitude, Bonaire is the eastern-most of the ABC Islands.

## By Air

Flying time between New York/Newark and Bonaire is just under five hours, and from Miami, it's two hours and 45 minutes. Neighboring Curaçao is a mere 15 minutes away, while the flight from Aruba takes 30 minutes. Since there are only a limited number of direct flights to Bonaire, you will probably fly first to Curaçao and then pick up a connecting flight on **ALM** ( 1-800/327-7230), which offers several daily flights between Curaçao and Bonaire. ALM does offer non-stop service from Miami to Bonaire Wednesdays and Saturdays.

Through its codeshare program with **United Airlines**, passengers flying on United from other U.S. cities connect in Miami with the ALM flight to Bonaire. The codeshare fare is valid on direct flights only and reservations must be made through United ( 1-800/241-6522). Other days, travellers in the United States and Canada will have to fly to Curaçao out of Miami, and then continue on to Bonaire.

**Air Aruba** ( 1-800/882-7822) offers flights to Bonaire via Aruba out of Newark, Miami, Baltimore, and Tampa. Flights are primarily on the weekends and vary by airport.

**American Airlines** ( 1-800/433-7300) offers daily non-stop service out of Miami (11 am departure) to Curaçao.

**KLM** ( 1-800/374-7747) offers direct service from Holland a few times a week. Otherwise,

travellers can fly to Curaçao and connect with one of the ALM flights.

A few days in Bonaire can easily be combined with a trip to Venezuela. **Avensa** ( 1-800/428-3672) offers regularly scheduled service between Caracas and Bonaire.

## Island Orientation

Covering an area of 112 square miles, Bonaire is the second largest of the ABC Islands. Shaped like a boomerang with its inner edge facing west, it is 24 miles long and three to seven miles wide. Rough seas driven by the constant trade winds that blow in from Africa batter Bonaire's windward coast, while the waters on its protected leeward side are calm and well-suited for swimming, diving and other water sports.

Flights to Bonaire land at the **Flamingo Airport** five minutes south of the capital, Kralendijk, on the island's southeast coast. Just outside the airport are Port Bonaire and the Plaza Resort, the island's newest five-star resort and one of two on the island. Most other island accommodations are located within the concave section of the leeward coast, and no more than 10 minutes from Kralendijk by car. The semi-arid landscape of Bonaire's central region is reminiscent of the American Southwest.

Several of the hotels north of Kralendijk are within easy walking distance of each other. Playa Lechi, one of the few beaches on the is-

land, is at the Sunset Beach Hotel. Directly opposite the hotels, just half a mile offshore, lies Klein Bonaire. The white sandy beaches of this uninhabited 1,500-acre islet are popular for picnics and snorkeling. Many popular dive sites are in the waters surrounding the island.

Millenia ago Bonaire was a steep coral mountain that rose out of the sea when volcanic eruptions caused sea levels to decline. This is most evident in the island's hilly northern region, where steep coral cliffs run along the coast. Greener and more fertile than the rest of the island, much of Bonaire's northern section is occupied by the Washington-Slagbaai National Park, a 13,500-acre nature preserve that is home to 189 species of birds, innumerable lizards, cacti, the divi-divi tree and Bonaire's best snorkeling. Also in the park is Mt. Brandaris, at 714 feet, the highest point on the island. Gotomeer, a beautiful inland lake and favorite feeding ground of flamingos, Rincon, the oldest village on Bonaire, and the Indian caves at Boca Onima are also nearby.

Covered with sand dunes, salt flats and mangroves, the flat open landscape of the southern region contrasts sharply with the north. On the leeward side are Pink Beach, the longest expanse of beach on the island, and the Azko Nobel Salt Works.

Pekelmeer, the world's largest flamingo sanctuary, occupies the saltpans that are inland of the southern tip. Lac Bay, a sheltered cove bordered by mangroves on the windward

side, is a favorite destination of windsurfers, birdwatchers and naturalists, who swim and sun on Sorobon Beach. Cai, a village on the northern edge of the bay, hosts a popular Sunday afternoon beach party.

## Arrival & Getting To Your Hotel

You should have no trouble finding your way through Bonaire's Flamingo Airport. After breezing through customs, you can hop in a cab at the taxi stand just outside. Fares are calculated based on distance and are charged per cab, not per person. Cab fare to your hotel should be no more than $15.

Major car rental agencies, including Avis, Budget, Dollar and Hertz, are right outside. They should provide you with directions to your hotel as well as an island map.

## Getting Around The Island

When not diving, Bonaire's active visitors set off to explore the island on their own, primarily by jeep, mountain bike or scooter. You will want to do the same.

### Car Rentals

Since rentals are popular on Bonaire, if you're planning on renting a car for the duration of your stay, it is advisable to make arrangements prior to your arrival. You may also get a better rate by doing so. When making hotel reservations, ask if there is a car rental

agency on the property. If so, you may be able to rent a car at the same time.

Jeeps are especially popular and are a good idea if you'll be carrying dive equipment or plan on exploring the north coast. Though more expensive, we prefer to rent from the larger international agencies, since their cars tend to be newer and better maintained. To accommodate divers, most agencies offer minivan pick-ups and jeeps.

The following agencies have branches at the airport and/or offer airport pick-up:

**AB CAR RENTAL:** Flamingo Airport, 8980/Fax 5034. Open: 7:30 am-12 noon, 1 pm-5 pm.

**AVIS:** Flamingo Airport, 5182; J.A. Abraham Blvd. 4, 5795. Open: 7 am to 8 pm. Pick-up time: 9:30 am to 4:30 pm.

**BUDGET:** Flamingo Airport, 8315. Open: 6:30 am until last flight. Kaya L.D. Gerharts 22, 8300. Open: 8 am-12 noon and 1:30 pm-5:30 pm. Weekends: 8 am-12 noon and 1 pm-5 pm.

**DOLLAR:** Flamingo Airport, 5588. Kaya Grandi 86, 8888. Open: 7:30 am-12 noon, and 1:30-5 pm.

**HERTZ:** Flamingo Airport, 7221. Open: 7 am-6 pm.

**TOTAL:** Flamingo Airport, 8313. Open: 7 am until last flight.
In order to rent a car you must have a valid driving license, which has been held for at least 24 months. The minimum age requirement varies by agency and the type of vehicle you wish to rent, and can be anywhere from 21 to 26 years of age. Payment can be made in cash or by credit card. However, if you pay by cash you may need to leave a fairly substantial deposit. Most agencies offer unlimited mileage.

Driving is on the right side of the road and there are no traffic signals at intersections, so proceed with caution. While roads in town and major residential areas are paved, dirt roads predominate throughout much of the island. The speed limit is 25 mph in towns and villages and between 35 and 50 mph in the countryside. When driving in the countryside, and even in Rincon and the villages, watch for goats and donkeys.

## Motorcycles, Scooters & Bicycles

Two-wheelers are a great way to get around the island and are available at several agencies not far from the hotels. Avid mountain bikers will enjoy exploring the back roads, and our island tours can be done just as easily by bicycle or motorbike as by car. Your hotel activity desk should be able to make a recommendation or help you make arrangements. Always check the brakes, tires and other equipment before riding away. And remember, just because you're on vacation doesn't mean you can throw caution to the winds. To

rent a motorcycle or scooter you must be at least 18 years of age and have a valid driver's license.

### Taxis

At last count there were 14 cabbies on Bonaire. To get in touch with one, contact the central dispatch office at 5330. Cabs do not have meters. Instead, fares have been fixed by the government. Ask the driver what the fare will be before getting into his cab. If you need transportation back to your hotel after dinner, you may request that a cab be called for you.

## Where To Stay

Accommodations on Bonaire range from a homey bed and breakfast in town to a luxurious five-star resort, with most falling somewhere in-between. Unlike Aruba, Bonaire has no strip of high-rise beachfront hotels – there is no such beach and Bonaire doesn't attract that type of tourist anyway.

What you will find are a few standard hotel rooms and a lot of one- , two- and sometimes three-bedroom apartments or suites with fully equipped kitchenettes. Almost all are on the water, though only a few have sizeable beaches. Practically all of Bonaire's hotels cater to divers and dive groups. Most have dive shops on the premises. Some even have their own fleet of rental cars. Most offer dive packages, which may include a meal plan and

even car rental, in addition to diving and accommodations.

## Alive Price Scale

Our price scale is designed to give you a ballpark figure to plan with. Since many accommodations are multi-bedroom suites, where appropriate, our price classifications are based on a one-bedroom suite, which usually sleeps four. Rates are given for high season, which runs from mid-December to mid-April. Keep in mind that Bonaire is rapidly becoming a year-round destination, so variations between winter and summer rates are gradually diminishing. For some hotels it may be necessary to reserve far in advance, even during the summer months. If you're planning on visiting during the off-season, you may also do better by reserving with the hotel directly, rather than through a reservation service or travel agent.

Breakfast and meals are generally not included in the rate, though most hotels do offer separate meal plans. A $5 government tax is levied on the room rate and a 10-15% service charge will be added to the rate as well.

| | |
|---|---|
| Deluxe | $250+ |
| Expensive | $150-$250 |
| Moderate | $100-$150 |
| Inexpensive | Under $100 |

All hotels described take major credit cards unless specifically noted.

## CAPTAIN DON'S HABITAT

*Kaya Gob. N. Debrot*
*P.O. Box 88*
*Oceanfront villas, cottages and deluxe oceanfront rooms*
*599-7-8290; fax 599-7-8240*
*U.S. representative: Habitat North American Office*
*1-800-327-6709; fax 305-371-2337*
*Moderate/expensive*

"Total Diving Freedom" is more than just a concept at Captain Don's Habitat. It's a commitment. Certified divers can dive 24 hours a day (or night), 365 days a year, along pristine reefs not more than 90 feet beyond Captain Don's half-mile of shoreline (conditions permitting). Dive packages feature unlimited shore and boat diving, and cater to beginning as well as experienced divers, with over 20 diving specialty courses ranging from Open Water Certification to Master Scuba Diver. And there are special interest classes such as Photo Certification, Night Diver and many others.

*Captain Don is Captain Don Steward, founder of the dive industry on Bonaire.*

The setting is hard to beat. Habitat's villa-style accommodations extend along the coral bluffs overlooking the Caribbean. Featured are deluxe studio and one-bedroom suites with a kitchen and outdoor patio and dining area, as well as superior rooms with private balcony or patio. In addition to fantastic diving, Captain Don's guests enjoy great oceanfront dining at Rum Runner's Restaurant (see description in the dining section), their own sandy beach, as well as a sweetwater pool with a sundeck and, of course, an oceanside seat for those fabulous Bonairean sunsets. The atmosphere is casual and definitely laid-back. Day and evening ac-

*Morning and afternoon boat dives visit several different sites every day.*

*Accommodations are arranged to afford guests a great deal of privacy. All rooms are air conditioned and have a private outdoor entrance.*

tivities are highlighted in a daily bulletin available at the reception desk. Tuesday evenings feature an Antillean Buffet and folkloric dancing as well as a slide show and story-telling by Captain Don himself.

*Sunset Happy Hour at the Deco Stop Terrace Bar is a great time to trade stories with fellow*

**CARIB INN**
*J.A. Abraham Boulevard 46*
*P.O. Box 68*
*9 rooms (including apartments with full kitchens)*
*599-7-8819; fax 599-7-5295*
*E-mail 75317, 667@Compuserve*
*Inexpensive/moderate*

*We're not kidding. The Carib Inn has the highest return guest percentage on Bonaire and average occupancy on a yearly basis is well over 90%.*

If you picked Bonaire because you want to focus 100% on diving without distractions, go to your phone or fax machine right now and make a reservation at Bruce Bowker's Carib Inn. By purposely staying small and focusing on diving (the Carib has only nine rooms and no bar or restaurant), Bruce and his staff of PADI-certified instructors are able to provide personalized attention to all their guests, both in and out of the water. The dive shop is one of the most reputable on the island and features a full range of instruction, from a one-day resort course to specialty classes. An added advantage of the inn's small size is that friendships are formed quickly among both guests and staff, creating a family-type atmosphere. In fact, groups that meet at the hotel one year often plan to return together the next. The Carib Inn is a small, dedicated dive resort in the truest sense.

Though the inn does not have a restaurant, most rooms do have kitchens. **Richard's Waterfront Restaurant** is just a few steps

away and town is also within walking distance.

**SAND DOLLAR**
**CONDOMINIUMS & BEACH CLUB**
*Kaya Gob. N. Debrot 79*
*85 Ocean Front Apartments*
*599-7-8738; fax 599-7-8760*
*European representative:*
*Sergat Deutschland*
*Kaplaneigasse 55*
*D-64319 Pfungstadt*
*Contact person: Rita Morozow*
*U.S. Representative:*
*1-800-288-4773/407-774-9292; fax 407-774-9322*
*Moderate/expensive*

*An fine choice for families with young children.*

Feature articles in *Skin Diver Magazine* have identified the Sand Dollar Condominiums & Beach Club as one of the foremost dive resorts in the Caribbean, and rightfully so. In addition to a full curriculum of dive certification and specialty courses, the Sand Dollar Dive and Photo Center features one of the most advanced underwater photography facilities in the Caribbean, in both expertise and equipment. Experienced as well as beginning underwater photographers and video buffs will benefit from the Sand Dollar's personalized instruction. On-site film processing plus a slide viewing room (open 24 hours) allow for immediate critiques, creating the potential for fast improvement.

*Especially good for budding underwater photographers. First quality cameras and equipment can be rented at reasonable rates.*

Parents and kids love the Sand Penny Club. Mom and Dad get time off to dive or just do their own thing while kids 15 and under make new friends and participate in supervised activities, including arts and crafts, pool games, slide shows and supervised snor-

kel outings. All receive a coupon book featuring a free snorkel lesson and boat trip, among other "freebies," while children 12 to 15 receive a discount on resort dive courses and Junior Open Water certifications.

In addition to the dive center, the Sand Dollar also features a large freshwater swimming pool, two lighted outdoor tennis courts and oceanside terraces with easy access to the water – great for snorkeling, barbecues and sunbathing. The waterside Green Parrot Restaurant is best known for its giant Green Parrot hamburgers, and will gladly put together a picnic lunch. Accommodations include studio, one- , two- and three-bedroom apartments. All boast fully equipped kitchens, air-conditioned bedrooms and large terraces or balconies. Since each unit is privately owned, decor varies by apartment, with wicker furnishings standard. A small grocery store is conveniently located in the shopping mall at the entrance, along with a car rental, an ice cream parlor and a bank.

**BUDDY BEACH & DIVE RESORT**
*Kaya Gob. N. Debrot 85*
*P.O. Box 231*
*Apartments*
*599-7-5080; fax 599-7-8647*
*European representative:*
*Dutch Caribbean Promotion*
*0031-541-533-177; fax 0031-541-532-624*
*U.S. representative:*
*Caribbean Dive Tours, 1-800-934-DIVE*
*Rothschild Travel, 1-800-359-0747*
*Moderate*
Located between the Coral Regency Resort and Sand Dollar, this resort offers similar ac-

*Most of the condo owners are Dutch, as are the majority of the guests here.*

commodations at a slightly lower price. Though "beach" may be misleading, the Buddy Beach and Dive Resort, not unlike most accommodations on the island, does cater to divers. It features one- , two- and three-bedroom privately owned condominiums, which the resort's management maintains and rents out when they are not in use by their owners. All come with fully equipped kitchens, including dishwasher and microwave; and they are tastefully furnished in rattan. One-bedroom units are located on the ground floor and have an outdoor patio with a dining table off the living room, while the two- and three-bedroom units are duplex and feature terraces off the living room and master bedroom. Although on the small side, all bedrooms are air conditioned and have private baths. Living rooms are not air conditioned but do have ceiling fans.

Dive packages, including PADI, NAUI and CMAS certifications, as well as both boat and shore diving, can be arranged through the on-premises dive shop. Buddy Dive also has its own fleet of rental cars, featuring double cabin pick-ups, jeeps and mini vans. All-inclusive packages (accommodations, diving and rental car) can be arranged. Après diving hours can be spent at the waterfront Buddy's Dive Bar and Restaurant.

**CORAL REGENCY RESORT**
*Kaya Gob. N. Debrot 90*
*P.O. Box 380*
*32 apartments*
*599-7-5580; fax 599-7-5680*
*U.S. Representative:*
*Neal Watson's Undersea Adventures*
*1-800-327-8150; fax 305-359-0071*
*Expensive*

On the strip between the Buddy Beach and Dive Resort and Captain Don's Habitat, the Coral Regency has one- and two-bedroom and studio apartments in beautifully landscaped surroundings. All first-floor units (studios and some one-bedrooms) have a private patio, while those on the second floor (one and two bedrooms) have a balcony. The Dutch Caribbean-style buildings are arranged around the pool in a horseshoe open to the Caribbean; all apartments have ocean views. There are ceiling fans in the living rooms and bedrooms. The bedrooms, all with private bath, are also air conditioned. Apartments are tastefully furnished in wicker and pastels. The **Oceanfront Restaurant** and **Bon Bini Dive Shop** are on the premises.

*The Oceanfront Restaurant is known for its authentic "Jamaican jerk" cooking and its Friday night Reggae Jerk Boogie Festival.*

**CLUB NAUTICO BONAIRE**
*Kaya Jan N.E. Craane 24*
*Kralendijk*
*599-7-5800; fax 599-7-5850*
*Deluxe*

At Club Nautico Bonaire you will settle in to five stars of European-style comfort in a one-bedroom luxury suite or two-bedroom penthouse overlooking the waterfront promenade, just steps away from downtown Kralendijk. "Quietly refined" best describes these spacious apartments. All feature balco-

*The penthouses feature a private rooftop terrace and a walk-in closet in the master bedroom.*

nies off the living and bedrooms; remote control air conditioners and ceiling fans in both the bedroom and living areas; large baths with jacuzzi and bidet; large closets; independent water heater and washer and dryer; cable television in the living room and master bedroom; and a fully equipped kitchen. Dark wood trim against white walls plus solid wooden doors and shutters, and understated yet obviously first quality furnishings attest to the fact that no expense was spared.

Just as you would expect, the centerpiece at Club Nautico is its private pier, home of **Triad Boat Rentals, Inc.** Experienced boaters can captain their own Quest 24-foot and explore the intimate bays and reefs along Bonaire's leeward coast, fish the reef beyond pink beach, or just laze off the coast of Klein Bonaire. You must have a valid boating license or proof of boat-handling ability and knowledge in order to rent a Quest 24-foot. Otherwise, you must arrange for a captain. Triad Boat Rentals are also available to non-guests. 5800 and ask for the piermaster.

If you'd rather let someone else do the work, charters can be arranged aboard a Bertram 46-foot or Chris Craft 46-foot. When not at sea, Club Nautico guests are just steps away from shopping and fine dining in town. Or they can relax pierside with cocktails and informal dining at Club Nautico's Terrace Bar, prepare their own poolside barbecue, or just spend a quiet evening at home.

## Bed & Breakfasts

### THE BLUE IGUANA

*Kaya Prinses Marie 6*
*7 rooms*
*599-7-6855; fax 599-7-6855*
*Inexpensive*

Nestled in a quiet corner of downtown Kralendijk, the Blue Iguana is an historic Bonairean mansion with laid-back, 'funky' charm. Guests here are not renting a room or apartment but are sharing an entire home. Furnishings include ceiling fans, authentic West Indian antiques, an al fresco breakfast patio, shared kitchen and bath, a living room and den with a small library, games, TV/VCR, CD player, and a spacious backyard with a do-it-yourself barbecue.

*Diving can be arranged through Bon Bini Divers.*

### THE GREAT ESCAPE

*E.E.G. Boulevard 97*
*10 rooms*
*599-7-7488; fax 599-7-7480*
*Inexpensive/moderate*

Although just minutes away from Kralendijk, Pink Beach and other island attractions, you'll feel pleasantly secluded from the rest of the world as you lounge by the pool at the Great Escape. This lovely Spanish villa features beautifully decorated guest rooms with air conditioning, ceiling fans and private baths in a tranquil garden setting. Breakfast is served buffet-style in the outdoor restaurant which, as indicated by the large barbecue pit, specializes in grilled meats. Lunch and dinner menus change daily. There is a small playground for young children as well as a reading room and table games for older guests.

*A luxurious small hotel in the traditional sense.*

## Five-Star Resorts

### PLAZA RESORT BONAIRE

*J.A. Abraham Boulevard*
*174 rooms (including apartments)*
*599-7-2500; fax 599-7-7133*
*Handicapped accessible*
*Deluxe*

A turquoise lagoon winds its way through the Plaza Resort, the youngest member of the Van der Valk family of hotels and the newest property on Bonaire. Uniquely situated on a peninsula just minutes from the Flamingo Airport, the Plaza Resort takes full advantage of its location to provide guests with a complete vacation, both on land and sea.

The Plaza's aquatic facilities have been carefully designed and constructed so as not to disrupt Bonaire's marine environment. Guests can sail in on their own yacht and moor it at their doorstep or rent a Boston Whaler from the resort's marina. The Complete Dive and Sports Center features dive instruction in a 10-foot-deep seaquarium built into the lagoon, as well as windsurfing and other water sports. Snorkelers enjoy easy access to a reef just a few yards from a sandy beach on the ocean side of the resort. Steps away from the beach is a spacious terrace featuring a large freshwater pool and an adjacent kiddie pool. Light meals and snacks are served poolside at the Banana Tree Restaurant.

On land there are three tennis courts, conference facilities, a shopping arcade, and a lagoon-side bar and restaurant with both indoor and outdoor dining. The casino is

slated to be up and running by the time you read this. Car rentals, island tours and other arrangements can be made at the Tour Desk. A half basketball court, three squash courts and a jogging track are planned and may be ready when you visit.

Accommodations include spacious villas with high peaked wooden ceilings and luxury suites, which are only slightly smaller. All are air conditioned, feature two queen-size beds, large European-style bath with a double sink and separate water closet, cable television, generous closet space with a safe, and a mini-fridge.

*All accommodations offer a choice of ocean or lagoon view and are priced accordingly.*

Should you decide you'd like to return again and again (or never leave), the Plaza's self-contained condominium complex features modern one- and two-bedroom apartments, many of which are currently for sale.

**HARBOUR VILLAGE BEACH RESORT**
*Kaya Gob. N. Debrot 72*
*70 rooms*
*599-7-7500; fax 599-7-7507; reservation fax 599-7-7515*
*U.S. Representative:*
*First Class Resorts, N.A., One Alhambra Plaza, Suite 1150, Coral Gables, FL 33134; 305-567-9509; fax 305-567-9659*
*Venezuelan Representative:*
*First Class Resorts, S.A., Edif. No. 33-AV. Sur Once, Esq. De Puente Victoria Monray, Caracas 1010, Venezuela; 02-571-8724; fax 02-576-4418*
*Deluxe*
Spread across 100 acres, Harbour Village is a world unto itself. Shaded courtyards, colorful gardens, and spectacular ocean views con-

tribute to the marvelously low-key luxury you'll find here. Guest rooms are elegantly decorated and feature a terrace large enough to accommodate four for dining.

Dining is one of the many pleasures Harbour Village has to offer. Breakfast and dinner are served on the tri-level Kasa Coral Gourmet Dining Terrace. Lunch and happy hour drinks are served beachside at the more casual La Balandra Bar and Grill.

Guests have a long list of recreational facilities to choose from, including a private beach, swimming pool with terrace, tennis courts, a health club with aerobics instruction, bike rentals, plus a full range of watersports, including scuba diving, snorkeling, sailing, windsurfing, and deep sea fishing. Harbour Village also has a full-service marina. Guests can sign up for island tours, birdwatching excursions and day trips to Klein Bonaire. Harbour Village also has its own disco featuring island rhythms, and a piano bar.

## Dining

Dining will certainly rank high among the activities you'll enjoy while vacationing on Bonaire. Menus range from local Antillean fare or that North American staple, burgers and fries, to French, Italian, and Indonesian cuisines, with plenty of options in between. Seafood, of course, tops most menus, with imported U.S. beef a close second. You can be sure that the "catch of the day" is just that, since much of the seafood on the menu will

have been brought in by the fishermen who sailed into Sorobon Bay at 4 o'clock that afternoon.

***The Alive Price Scale***
*Expensive - $35+ pp*
*Moderate - $25+*
*Inexpensive - under $25.*

We've put together a list of our favorite restaurants, both in the hotels and around Kralendijk. Hotel restaurants are comparable to those in town. Those we've selected are right at the water's edge, the perfect vantage point for taking in Bonaire's fabulous sunsets. Dress is always casual and the atmosphere low-key and friendly. Whenever possible it's best to reserve ahead and plan on dining before 10 pm since most kitchens close at that time. Unless we've indicated otherwise, prices are comparable to those at a moderately priced restaurant in a metropolitan area of the United States.

## RICHARD'S WATERFRONT

*J.A. Abraham Blvd. 60*
*5263*
*Seafood & steak*
*Happy hour, 5-6:30 pm*
*Dinner, 6:30-10:30 pm*
*Closed Mondays*
*Reservations requested for groups of six or more only*
*Moderate*

If we were asked to name the one thing that makes dinner at Richard's Waterfront so unforgettable, we would be hard pressed for an answer. It could be that pleasant feeling that washes over you as you step through the indoor foyer to the outdoor dining room. There, other than the stars, the only light seems to come from the candles on the tables and the strands of tiny white lights twinkling on the palms. Background music is provided by the gentle rhythm of the Caribbean lapping

*If you have dinner at Richard's your first night on Bonaire, you may never go anywhere else.*

*Richard's was a hunting lodge in the 1970's.*

against the shore. Then again, there are those fanciful drink specials mixed up by Robby, who is behind the gleaming mahogany-topped coral bar with stools that were custom made in Santo Domingo.

*Richard, Robby and Mario are co-owners.*

We have to mention Chef Benito's chalkboard menu, which changes daily depending on what was freshest at the market that very day. The emphasis is on seafood from the Caribbean basin, along with U.S. sirloin, filet mignon, chicken and pasta. Benito's cooking is nothing short of magic, with subtle seasoning to enhance the fresh flavor of the ingredients.

It would be unfair if we didn't mention the waitresses, who come to your table with a smile and plenty of Bonairean charm, or Richard, your host, who brings it all together.

**MI PORON RESTAURANT KRIJOJO**

*Kaya Caracas 1*
*5199*
*Typical Bonairean cuisine*
*Lunch, noon-2:30 pm*
*Dinner, 6 pm-10:30*
*Museum 11 am-11 pm*
*Closed Sunday*
*Inexpensive*

*A poron is a traditional cooking pot.*

For a real taste of Bonaire, Mi Poron is a must. With so many different dive sites to explore, not to mention Washington-Slagbaai National Park, the Flamingo Sanctuary and Lac Baai, visitors to Bonaire can go home both happily exhausted and refreshed – but without ever experiencing anything of the island's history or people. Guests at Mi Poron not only sample traditional Bonairean cook-

ing but a bit of the island's past as well. Dining is outdoors in the shady backyard patio of this 130-year-old Bonairean home, which has been furnished with period antiques just as it would have been at the turn of the century. The daily menu features local dishes such as *sópi piska* (fish soup), *kabrito stoba* (goat stew), and *moro* (rice and beans prepared Caribbean-style) and, of course, *funchi*, a traditional side dish made from cornmeal and similar to polenta. The small wooden tables are gaily decorated with hand-painted fish, birds and corals.

**BEEFEATER GARDEN RESTAURANT & BAR**
*Kaya Grandi 12*
*7776*
*Local/international*
*Monday-Friday, 9 am-11 pm*
*Weekends, 3 pm-11 pm*
*Moderate*

Beefeater is set in an attractive traditional Bonairean home, but the dining room is rarely used. Patrons prefer dining al fresco in the breezy tropical garden behind the house. However, do take a few moments to admire the local handicrafts and paintings, most of which are on sale, before wandering out to the garden. Fresh local fish is the specialty and varies according to that day's catch. Also on the menu is a delicious *stoba* (stew) made with chicken or goat *(cabrito),* chicken Indonesian, banana or lamb curry, vegetarian dishes, pasta and grilled steaks. Lighter international fare is offered at lunch time. A small band performs local music in the garden on Sunday evenings.

*Sunday evenings are especially lovely.*

**RENDEZ-VOUS RESTAURANT & ESPRESSO BAR**

*Kaya L.D. Gerharts 3*
*8454 or 8539*
*Continental*
*Dinner, 6 pm-10:30 pm; bar, 5 pm-2 am*
*Reservations requested*
*Moderate/expensive*

"Quietly elegant" best describes the ambience at Chef Marcel's intimate restaurant, where you'll dine by candlelight, inside or out. French bread fresh from the oven, along with the chef's specially prepared garlic butter, is a fitting introduction to Marcel's culinary skill. The menu features homemade soups and appetizers followed by international and local dishes, including *gregrilde vis "Bonaire"* (grilled fish prepared Creole style in a tomato, onion and celery sauce), the seafood platter "Rendez-Vous" (assorted seafood served in a garlic sauce), and the lamb filet "Rendez-Vous" (lamb baked in a puff pastry and served with a mild garlic sauce). Although not always on the menu, *keshi yena,* a local favorite made with chicken and raisins prepared in a tomato sauce, rolled in cheese and baked, is held in high regard by Marcel's staff and regular guests. For dessert try the *quesillo,* a local sweet which is similar to flan, accompanied by the special coffee of the house, *café à la Rendez-Vous,* or an espresso or capuccino.

*Owner/chef Marcel is from Holland.*

Set aside a little time to visit the bar, which is tucked away in a separate room in the back of the restaurant. The beautiful bar itself is made of highly polished mirante wood. Proudly displayed above it is Marcel's ciga-

rette lighter collection, the largest on the island. Also worth a look are the photographs, both in the bar and in the dining room, of island land and seascapes, including an episodic depiction of the sinking of the *Hilma Hooker* and the slave huts. They were taken by well-known photographer Rien von der Helm.

**MONA LISA BAR & RESTAURANT**

*Kaya Grandi 15*
*8718*
*Continental*
*Monday-Friday*
*Lunch, noon-2 pm*
*Dinner, 6 pm-10 pm*
*Bar, noon-2 am*
*Expensive*
*Daily prix fixe (served at the bar only) $10*

*Chef/manager Dohwe Dooper puts his creative talents to work designing the weekly menu based on what's available at the local market.*

When you walk past Mona Lisa, you'll probably turn around to give it a second look. Its heavy, old world decor, accented by dark wooden paneling against whitewashed walls hung with still lives and Dutch landscapes, seems out of place in the Caribbean, though the ever-present Hollanders at the bar are perfectly at home. French-inspired Continental cuisine dominates the menu, which changes weekly depending on what's available. There is a selection of wines from Chile, France and Spain. The bar is a popular gathering place, with the late night crowd, mostly Dutch and a few locals, spilling out onto the street.

*Jardin Tropical is a local favorite for special occasions such as birthdays and anniversaries.*

**JARDIN TROPICAL**
*Shopping Center La Terraza*
*5718 (reservations requested)*
*French*
*Dinner, 6 pm-10 pm; closed Mondays*
*Expensive*

Innovative French-inspired cuisine served in a romantic garden setting overlooking Kralendijk and the bay, with friendly, personalized service, have earned Jardin Tropical a listing in *The Best of the Caribbean*, an annual guide to the finest hotels and restaurants in the Caribbean. Kralendijk's only elevator, glass-enclosed and located next door to the Mona Lisa Restaurant, opens to the restaurant on the third floor of La Terraza Shopping Center. Plants from floor to ceiling with plenty of space between tables and windows all around create a breezy tropical ambience. Arrive in time for sunset cocktails at the bar, set on the side of the restaurant facing the bay, and then enjoy dinner by candlelight.

*This is the highest restaurant on the island. The elevator ride affords a panoramic view of the southern portion of the island.*

Husband and wife team Jacques and Lisa Meijers opened their doors just three years ago. While Jacques is in the kitchen overseeing the preparation of house specialties such as lobster thermidor and jardin de mer tropical, as well as the special catch of the day, Lisa is in the dining room to greet their guests and ensure that the evening will be among their pleasant memories of Bonaire.

**CAPRICCIO RESTAURANT**
*Kaya Isla Riba 1*
*7230*
*Italian and Continental cuisine*
*Inexpensive to expensive*

If Italian cuisine is what you want, be it pizza with the gang, an intimate dinner for two, or anything in between, head to Capriccio, where you'll have a choice of two distinct dining experiences. It started as a whim. Vacationing Italian restaurateurs fell in love with Bonaire, so they decided to join forces and open a restaurant. The chef is from Milan. His associates are from Padua, Piacenza and Torino.

*Capriccio has assumed the task of educating the public on the pleasures of fine wine.*

Subdued lighting and tables elegantly laid with crystal stemware and china set the tone in the downstairs dining room, where fine Italian cuisine is served, highlighted by pastas imported from Italy and local seafood. Be sure to request the wine list, which features a carefully chosen selection of vintage Italian wines as well as selections from France and California. All are stored in Capriccio's custom-built wine cellar.

*Ask for a table in the front for a view of the bay.*

For less formal dining, head upstairs to the open-air trattoria. Ideal for families and groups, the menu features pizza, some pastas, burgers, steaks and similar fare. Whether they dine upstairs or down, all guests are invited to a complimentary mimosa, spumante or orange juice. Take-out pizza is also available.

**ZEEZICHT**
*Kaya Craane 12*
*8434*
*Dutch, Indonesian and local cuisines*
*8:30 am-10:30 pm*
*Moderate*
With antique ships wheels, lanterns, turtle shells and assorted nautical odds and ends for

decor, Zeezicht looks just as you would expect of a seafood restaurant dating back to 1929. A change of pace from the newer restaurants on the island, Zeezicht is best known for its front porch overlooking the sea and local seafood specialties, including *cari cari* (a stew of chopped fish and vegetables), *chipi chipi* (local snails prepared in a sauce), and ceviche. Also popular is the *nasi goring special*, an Indonesian entrée of mixed fried rice, chicken leg, sate, and shrimp koepoeke. Chicken, pork and steak are also on the menu. All meals come with a choice of fries, rice or funchi. Afternoon coffee and cake on the terrace is quite popular.

**EDDY'S FIFTY'S**
*Intersection of Kaya Grande and Kaya L.D. Gerharts*
*International*
*Inexpensive*
What do tropical cocktails, banana splits, Dutch specialties, polished chrome and Elvis Presley have in common? They may not all be holdovers from the 1950's but you'll find them at Eddy's Fifty's in downtown Kralendijk. In true diner style, Eddy's recreates the 50's with a 1990's Caribbean twist on everything from the black and white checkerboard floor, to the pink walls covered with photos of Elvis, Marilyn Monroe, James Dean, Humphrey Bogart, Jerry Lewis and Rock Hudson, along with period ads for Coca Cola and hair cream. So put a quarter in the jukebox, grab a booth or a stool at the counter, order a burger and a shake, a rum punch or an Amstel, and join the fun.

Eddie's is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner, and offers hamburgers, sandwiches, steaks and fish prepared Dutch-style.

**TOY'S GRAND CAFÉ**
*Abraham Blvd., across from the Plaza Resort 6666*
*Indonesian/French*
*4 pm onwards*
*Moderate*
Location isn't the only thing that sets Toy's apart from the other restaurants on Bonaire. Far more memorable are its unique French/Indonesian menu and lively decor featuring, among other things, photos of celebrities. The unique dining experience you'll enjoy at Toy's makes it worth the few extra minutes it will take you to get there.

## Hotel Restaurants

**RUM RUNNERS COCKTAIL BAR & RESTAURANT**
*Captain Don's Habitat 8290*
*International*
*7 am-10 pm*
*Moderate*
While enjoying a late dinner at Rum Runner's on the seaside terrace at Captain Don's, we couldn't help but notice the lights – the faraway glow of Curaçao to the west, the stars above, and the occasional glow of an underwater spotlight from one of Captain Don's 24-hour divers. Our meal was no less delightful. Rum Runners features a Caribbean-inspired menu of international favorites, including assorted pasta dishes, seafood, chicken and steaks, along with nightly spe-

*Rum Runners has a sister restaurant in Curaçao in the Otrobanda section of Willemstad.*

cials. Red snapper in a light coconut sauce proved to be an excellent choice. Just as delicious was that day's catch – barracuda, grilled to perfection.

Come for the sunset happy hour at the Deco Stop Bar, Wednesday through Sunday from 5:30 to 6:30 pm. Sundays feature a Rum Punch Party during the happy hour, followed by an all-you-can-eat barbecue buffet. Tuesday is Antillean night, with local cuisine and a folkloric dance show. Live music performed by the Kunuku Band, followed by a Mexican buffet, have made Thursdays just as popular.

**THE OCEANFRONT RESTAURANT & BAR**

*The Coral Regency Resort*
*5644 or 5580, ext. 108/110*
*International and Jamaican*
*7:30 am to 11 pm daily*
*Happy hour, 5:30 pm-6:30 pm*
*Friday is Reggae Night*
*Sunday Champagne Brunch, 11 am-3 pm*
*Moderate*

The music and the food are *slammin'* Friday nights at the Oceanfront's Reggae Jerk Boogie Festival. Milton Koeks cooks up a non-stop reggae beat headlined by Oceanfront Master Chef Gibi's authentic Jamaican Jerk Buffet. Don't limit yourself to Fridays. Though the oceanside dining room is perhaps a little quieter the rest of the week, Chef Gibi's fresh seafood dishes and steaks are terrific every night with or without music, and his Sunday Champagne Brunch, Bonaire's first, is a real treat. The dining room, an al fresco terrace built right into the seawall, is lovely.

*Owners Carol and Danny hail from New Jersey. But please, no turnpike jokes.*

**GREEN PARROT**
*Sand Dollar Beach Club*
*5454*
*Standard North American fare*
*8 am-10 pm*
*Happy hour, 5 pm-7 pm*
*Inexpensive/moderate*

*Casual outdoor dining.*

The Green Parrot's biggest claims to fame are its Parrot Burger, a whopping half-pound chargrilled burger of U.S. ground beef and its colorful tropical drinks with names like Lora Berde, the Green Parrot Special (brandy, Kahlua and Ponche Cuba), Flamingo Fling (vodka, peach schnapps, pineapple juice and Grenadine), and Twisted Turtle (Malibu rum, melon liqueur, and pineapple juice). It is located right over the water at the Sand Dollar Beach Club, and you couldn't ask for a better view of Klein Bonaire or the beautiful Bonairean sunset. Come for Happy Hour, have a tropical drink or two and we can practically guarantee you'll stay for dinner. The menu features char-grilled fish, U.S. steaks and chicken, all prepared in a variety of ways.

## Lighter Fare

Practically all hotel restaurants are open continuously all day long, serving sandwiches and snacks between the lunch and dinner hour. Should hunger strike when you're shopping or exploring Kralendijk, you'll always be within walking distance of any of the downtown eateries. You can grab a quick burger, sandwich or hotdog at **Naomi's Place,** a kiosk on Wilhemina Plein at the south end of Kayi Grande. **Je-Man,** a small, informal eatery just a few steps away, is open for break-

fast and lunch and specializes in pancakes and vegetarian dishes.

*Cozzoli's also delivers. 5195.*

For more North American-type fare, head to the **Harbourside Mall** on Kaya J.N.E. Craane, where there's a mini-food court featuring ice cream and frozen yogurt, **Kentucky Fried Chicken** and **Cozzoli's Pizza**. At Cozzoli's you can order pizza by the pie or by the slice with up to 13 toppings, as well as calzone, stromboli, roasted lamb gyros, subs and sandwiches.

The **Go Banana's Terrace** on the second floor of the Shopping Center La Terraza on Kaya Grandi is a great lunch spot, especially if you need to put your feet up and get out of the sun after spending the morning sightseeing or wandering through downtown. The specialty of the house is "Jungle Juice," but they also offer a full menu of salads, sandwiches, tropical drinks, ice cream, espresso and capuccino.

For a late night snack after an evening of merengue (a must!) at the Fantasy Disco or the discotheque "E Wowo," follow the local crowd to **Borinque Snack** on Kaya Gen. M. Piar. This take-out-only "snack" is open from 9 pm until 2 am and features traditional Antillean fare such as Indonesian *saté ku pinda saus* (pork kebobs with peanut sauce), French fries with peanut sauce, and *pisca hasa* (fried fish). It's a great way to sample the local cuisine!

## Sunup To Sundown

Great diving is the best reason to vacation on Bonaire, and many visitors happily spend a good part of the daylight hours underwater. However, Bonaire has lots more to offer the active vacationer. The waters on the leeward side of the island as well as Lac Bay on the windward are ideal for windsurfing, kayaking and other watersports. On land you can experience some of the Caribbean's best birdwatching, biking and eco-touring. Needless to say, you'll probably leave Bonaire wishing you could have stayed a little longer, and immediately plan a return visit.

## The Marine Park

"Bonaire – Diver's Paradise." This description is well-earned and a lot of effort is going into keeping it. Bonaire's reefs are well protected due to the island's privileged location south of the hurricane belt and to the dedication and effort of the dive community. In fact, together with the government, an industry association enforces environmental policy and proposes new legislation. The island banned spear fishing in 1971 and in 1975 the Bonairean government banned the breaking off of coral, dead or alive, as well as its sale. That ban continues in full force today; in fact nothing may be taken from the water, dead or alive. It is no wonder that Bonaire was the recipient of *Island Magazine's* Ecotourism Award in 1994.

*Bonaire's dive industry is "environmentally conscious" and self-regulated.*

Those two bans were forerunners to the foundation of the Bonaire Marine Park in 1979.

Made possible by a grant from the World Wildlife Fund, the park covers the entire coral reef ecosystem in the waters surrounding Bonaire and Klein Bonaire from the high water line to a depth of 200 feet. The Netherlands Antilles National Parks Foundation, STINAPA, manages the park. Both non-governmental and non-profit, STINAPA finances its activities through the collection of a $10 annual admission fee from divers. Those fees are used to maintain the moorings, pay the rangers and administrative staff and fund the educational programs offered across the island.

*Marine Park Headquarters is located three kilometers north of Kralendijk in the former aloe cookery at Barcadera.*

Of course, Captain Don Steward has played a major role in the preservation of Bonaire's reef. Together with a group of sponsors and with funding provided by concerned divers, the Captain founded the Sea Tether project in 1987, with the objective of creating 100 moored dive sites on Bonaire. In order to prevent anchor damage, they installed permanent moorings, which are the buoys you see at the offshore dive sites. Additionally, dive operations are required to report the number of divers on each dive in order for the association to monitor the number of visitors to each site. Once the number of visitors to a particular site becomes excessive or if the site shows evidence of damage, it will be closed for a period of time.

Education is another important way in which the Park Service strives to protect Bonaire's reef. As part of the Reef Preservation Program, free advanced and photo workshops are

offered to divers through all island dive shops. To heighten divers' respect and awareness of the pristine beauty of Bonaire's reef and the need to keep it that way, weekly Marine Park slide shows are held at dive shops and hotels across the island. The Park Service also produces brochures and leaflets for distribution by island dive shops concerning proper diving etiquette, boating and fishing regulations and information about its many activities.

Constant monitoring of the condition of the reef, including diver impact surveys, enables the Park Service to evaluate changes in the reef and trace their cause. Studies have even included a fish census!

## Life On The Reef

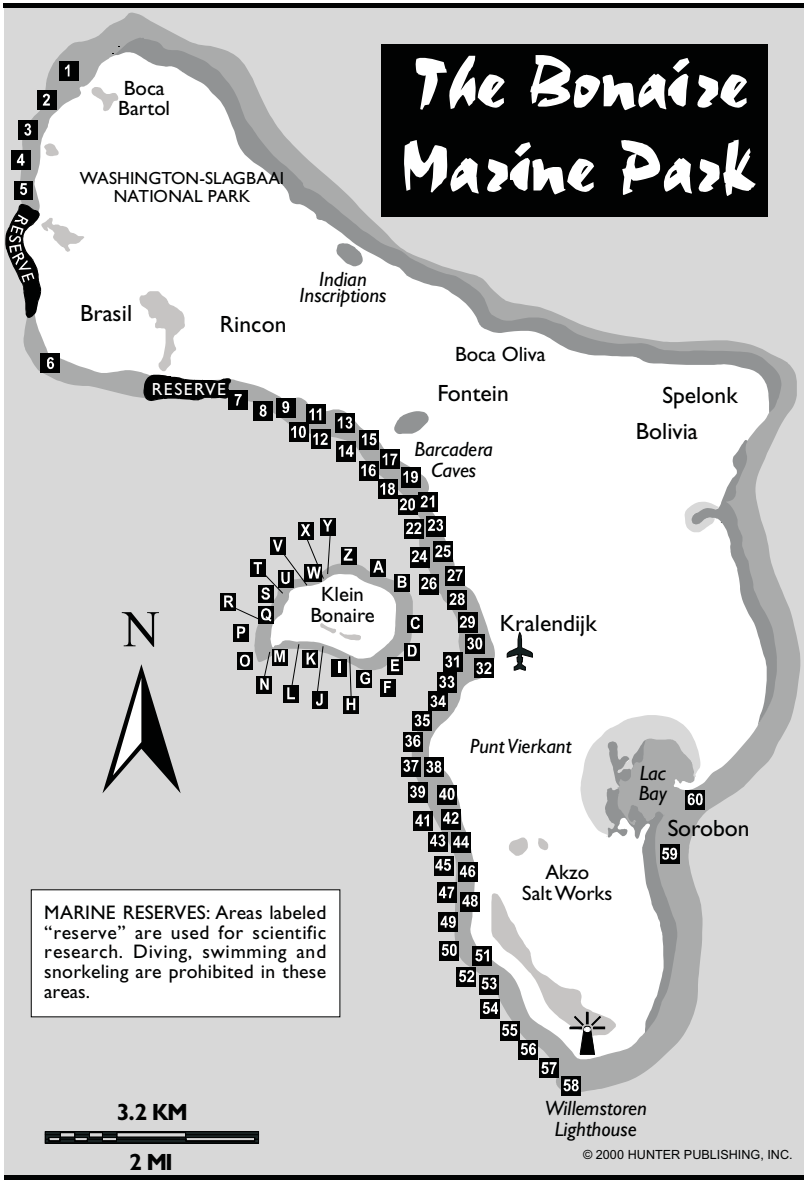
Bonaire's efforts at preservation have not gone unrewarded. Its reef is the healthiest and most densely populated ecosystem in the Caribbean. As you drive along the perimeter of the island, you'll notice that the reef starts right at the shoreline. In some places it will seem that the island and the reef are one. In fact, a shallow shelf covered with a wealth of hard and soft corals surrounds Bonaire and crests in just 20-40 feet of water.

The reef consists of that shallow plateau area followed by a drop-off. Occasional sandy patches break up the otherwise thick coral growth. Scorpionfish, lizardfish and peacock flounders prefer this portion of the reef along with flamingo tongue snails and fingerprint

# Bonaire Dive Sites

1. Boca Bartol *
2. Playa Benge
3. Playa Funchi
4. Bise Morto **
5. Boca Slagbaai
6. Nukove
7. Karpata
8. La Dania's Leap **
9. Rappel **
10. Bloodlet **
11. Ol' Blue
12. Country Garden **
13. Bon Bini Na Cas **
14. 1000 Steps (Trapi)
15. Weber's Joy/Witches Hut
16. Jeff Davis Memorial
17. Oil Slick Leap **
18. Barcadera **
19. Andrea II (Pali Coco)
20. Andrea I
21. Petries Pillar *
22. Small Wall
23. Cliff **
24. La Machaca (Habitat) *
25. Reef Scientifico (Habitat) *
26. Buddy's Reef (Buddy Dive) *
27. Bari (Sand Dollar) *
28. Front Porch (Sunset Beach) *
29. Something Special (Pali Grandi)
30. Town Pier (Waf Di Playa)
31. Calabas Reef (Dive Bonaire) *
32. Eighteenth Palm
33. Windsock (Riba Ruina)
34. North Belnem
35. Bachelors Beach (Fondu Di Kalki)
36. Chez Hines
37. Lighthouse Point
38. Punt Vierkant
39. The Lake
40. Hilma Hooker
41. Angel City
42. Alice In Wonderland
43. Aquarius *
44. Larry's Lair
45. Jeannies Glory
46. Salt Pier (Waf Di Saliña)
47. Salt City
48. Invisibles
49. Tori's Reef
50. Pink Beach
51. White Slave *
52. Margate Bay
53. Red Beryl *
54. Atlantis *
55. Vista Blue *
56. Sweet Dreams *
57. Red Slave (Kas Di Katibu)
58. Willemstoren Lighthouse *
59. Blue Hole *
60. Cai *

* shore dive only
** boat dive only


The Bonaire Marine Park
Boca Bartol
WASHINGTON-SLAGBAAI NATIONAL PARK
RESERVE
Brasil
Rincon
Indian Inscriptions
Boca Oliva
RESERVE
Fontein
Spelonk
Bolivia
Barcadera Caves
Klein Bonaire
Kralendijk
N
Punt Vierkant
Lac Bay
Sorobon
Akzo Salt Works
Willemstoren Lighthouse
MARINE RESERVES: Areas labeled "reserve" are used for scientific research. Diving, swimming and snorkeling are prohibited in these areas.
3.2 KM
2 MI
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cowries, who feed on the soft corals and gorgonians that thrive here. Look carefully for camouflaged trumpetfish. These unusual looking creatures hang vertically and then dart downwards to the sand to suck up their prey. Trumpetfish are very territorial and will even nip divers who are trespassing on their space.

As you approach the drop-off, the number of hard corals increases, with large formations of "mountainous" star coral, finger coral and brain coral. Moray eels, squirrel fish and blackbar soldierfish glide in and out of the crevices, often resting on the ledges that serve as cleaning stations manned by banded coral shrimp and arrowhead crabs.

Also growing within the crevices are sea anemones, home to cleaning shrimp and juvenile wrasses. An ambiotic relationship exists between the anemones, and the shrimp and wrasses. Immune to the anemone's sting, the shrimp and wrasses attract small fish, which they clean and the anemones eat. Also common to this area are fire and staghorn coral.

Though the reef may seem idyllic to divers, competition for space among the corals and other marine life is fierce. All must establish their territories in order to survive. When an aged coral head breaks off, its space is virtually covered with new growth immediately. Tube, vase and encrusting sponges will fasten to any dead coral skeletons. Hiding among them are brittle starfish, frogfish, juvenile fish and cleaning gobies. Just like a fisher-

man, the well-camouflaged frogfish cleverly dangles its bait from a filament hanging in front of its mouth. When its unsuspecting prey approaches, the frogfish merely leaps forward on its pectoral fins with its mouth open.

Seahorses are plentiful along the reef, but you'll have to look carefully to see them. Like a chameleon, seahorses change their body coloring to blend into their surroundings. Look for bright yellows, oranges, pinks, browns and black. They grow up to six inches in size and are usually found in the soft corals. Unlike other fish, they grasp onto the coral with their finless tails and do not swim great distances, but instead slowly glide along the bottom. Their transparent dorsal fin beats as many as 60 times per second.

Unique to the seahorse is their interesting method of reproduction. The male has a brood pouch over his abdomen and the female goes from male to male laying her eggs in his pouch. The male fertilizes the eggs and gives birth to live baby seahorses – a refreshing change!

It is also not unusual to spot sea turtles such as the hawksbill along the reef.

## The Sea Turtles Of Bonaire

Just as noteworthy as Azko Noble's efforts to protect Bonaire's flamingos are those of Albert de Soet, a Dutch resident of Bonaire and the founder of the **Sea Turtle Club Bonaire**. Mr. de Soet founded the club to pro-

tect Bonaire's sea turtle population from extinction through research and educational programs geared towards island residents and visitors. Incidentally, sea turtles are not only threatened in Bonaire and throughout the Caribbean but all over the world and are considered an endangered species by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

Four species of sea turtles are found in Bonairean waters, though their numbers are decreasing. The green turtle is found in waters close to shore and is characterized by its medium broad head, smooth edged shell and white underbelly. The hawksbill is easily identified by its narrow head, hawk-like bill, ragged shell and yellowish color. The loggerhead, which tends to stay in open waters, is similar to the green turtle but larger, with a massive head. The leatherback, the least common of the four, is very large and will only come to shore to nest.

Although sea turtles are air breathing reptiles, they can stay underwater for long periods of time and rarely come ashore except to lay their eggs. Their survival is threatened in several ways. The extensive development of the Caribbean is inhibiting the sea turtles' ability to reproduce since they will only nest on quiet beaches – which are increasingly hard to find. Not only is mankind encroaching on their territory, but he is also polluting their waters. Many sea turtles choke to death or are poisoned by floating debris, especially

plastics. Finally, sea turtles are being over-hunted.

In order to protect the sea turtle from extinction, the Sea Turtle Club requests that visitors and residents of Bonaire follow these guidelines:

Don't buy turtle products, whether they be food or gifts. Not only do you risk a fine since turtles are fully protected on Bonaire, but you also encourage their extinction. This is a good rule to follow no matter where you travel.

If you are on a beach when a sea turtle lays its eggs, leave it alone. Inform Mr. de Soet at the Sea Turtle Club or the Marine Park ( 8444) as soon as possible.

Report any sightings of sea turtles in Bonairean waters to your dive shop.

## Diving

*Only the most experienced divers should attempt to dive on the windward side of the island and then only with great caution.*

Bonaire boasts over 80 different dive sites, almost all of which are on the leeward side of the island. While the northern and windward coasts of Bonaire are constantly battered by powerful waves, the calm leeward waters are ideal for diving, thanks to Klein Bonaire, which acts like a barrier reef. Dive sites are installed and maintained by the Council of Underwater Resort Operators of Bonaire (CURO) and moored with buoys supplied by the Sea Tether Project and Aggressor Fleet Ltd.

All of the dives that follow are accessible to both snorkelers and divers. We've limited our selection to just a few of our favorites, which are suitable for novice to intermediate level divers. As defined by Jerry Schnabel and Susan L. Swygert in *The Diving and Snorkeling Guide to Bonaire*, a novice diver is someone who is in satisfactory physical condition, recently certified or a certified but infrequent diver. An intermediate diver is a frequent diver in excellent physical condition who has been certified for at least one year and who has recently been diving in similar waters.

## A Typical Dive

While no two of Bonaire's more than 80 dive sites are exactly alike, most share some common characteristics. The reef surrounding the island has a narrow sloping terrace that extends seaward from the shoreline with a drop-off at 33 feet, followed by a slope averaging around 30 feet to a vertical wall that descends sharply 100-200 feet to the ocean floor. Large elkhorn coral grow along the fringing reefs closest to the shoreline, followed by staghorn coral. Nearing the reef crest, colorful tropical fish, including French and queen angelfish, parrotfish, rock beauties and trumpet fish, swim amidst soft coral gorgonians, large brain corals, mustard hill corals and mountainous star coral. The sloping wall is covered with tube sponges, anemones, giant elephant ear sponges and iridescent purple vase sponges.

### Marine Park Regulations

These rules have been adopted to ensure that Bonaire will be a divers' paradise for years to come.

In order to SCUBA dive you must have a valid admission badge to the Marine Park. Badges can be purchased from your dive operator or at Park Headquarters.

Anchoring is forbidden in the Marine Park. Please use the mooring buoys provided.

Spearguns and spearfishing are prohibited. If you have a speargun, please leave it in safekeeping with the Police/Customs.

It is forbidden to remove anything living or dead from the Park (except garbage).

Make sure you do not damage the reefs in any way. Don't touch the corals and avoid silting up the bottom.

Handling animals and fish-feeding may be conducted under expert guidance only.

## Popular Dive Sites

*The coral formations on the sandy flats a short distance from shore make Pink Beach an especially fine location for snorkeling.*

**PINK BEACH**
*Shore/boat dive*
*Intermediate divers*
*Snorkeling*

Pink beach is one of the featured destinations of the southern tour of the island described on page 182. To reach the reef's crest or drop-off from shore you'll have to swim out about 100 yards across a sandy flat dotted with soft cor-

als and staghorn formations. The drop-off is literally covered with gorgonians and ranges from 30 to 40 feet. If you look carefully, you should be able to spot at least a seahorse or two gliding along the sand or latched onto a gorgonian, along with anemones and arrow crabs. Turtles are occasionally spotted here as well. Purple and iridescent vase sponges cover the face of the wall and you'll undoubtedly be joined by peacock flounders, stingrays and schools of goatfish as you glide along. If you head deeper, you may come upon a school of horse-eye jacks. Beware of scorpionfish. They can be easily mistaken for a rock and, when touched, their sting is painful and can be toxic.

**CALABAS**

*Shore dive*
*Novice divers*
*Snorkelers*

Located just offshore in front of the Carib Inn and the Divi Flamingo Beach Resort, Calabas is an especially fine choice for new divers, as well as a popular night dive. In the shallow area you'll see a great deal of staghorn coral and single coral heads. The site also features a colorful variety of fish, including French angelfish, many types of parrotfish and Spanish hogfish, along with anemones and sponges. The crest of the reef is at a depth of 30 feet and the wall drops to 90 feet, with purple tube sponges, orange sponges and formations of mountainous star coral growing on its face.

**FRONT PORCH**
*Shore dive*
*Novice divers*
*Snorkelers*
Front porch is another fine choice for new divers, as well as a great place for learning how to dive. Accessible from the beach in front of the Sunset Beach Hotel, the drop-off begins underneath the dive pier at a depth of 15 feet. Landmarks include a ship's anchor and a tugboat wreck at 50-75 feet. Tubastrea coral, fire coral and Christmas tree worms appear to have laid claim to the wreck, as has a green moray eel and schools of horse-eye jacks and large groupers. The reef itself, known as "Front Porch," begins at 20 feet and drops down sharply to 100 feet. Goatfish, parrotfish and French angelfish tend to linger along the upper crest of the reef, while schools of grunts and goatfish are easily spotted under the pier.

*Watch out for scorpionfish, which frequent the sandy bottom under the dive pier. It's best not to touch anything when diving.*

**SMALL WALL**
*Shore or boat dive*
*Novice divers*
*Snorkelers*
Small Wall is a protected reef that starts just 100 feet from shore across from the Black Durgon Inn. In fact, the boat moorings are in only 10 feet of water. Elkhorn coral, finger corals, brain corals and gorgonians abound in the shallow waters, making this an ideal site for snorkelers. The wall itself starts at a depth of 40 feet and descends to 70. The soft corals and small finger sponges growing along the upper crest of the reef are popular resting spots for seahorses, while green moray eels and nurse sharks are often sighted in and around the cave on the south-

ern portion of the wall. Elephant ear sponges grow in this area as well.

### ALICE IN WONDERLAND/ *HILMA HOOKER*

*Boat dive*
*Intermediate divers*

*The demise of the* Hilma Hooker *is documented in photographs on display at the Rendezvous Restaurant.*

Side by side across from the TransWorld Radio Towers just south of Kralendijk, these two sites are part of a double reef system that runs south from Punt Vierkant. The *Hilma Hooker* is actually within another site known as **Angel City**. When this 1,000-ton, 235-foot steel-hulled freighter docked at the Town Pier for emergency repairs, customs officials were rightfully suspicious. An impromptu inspection uncovered a cargo of marijuana. After the cargo was burned, dive operators requested that the *Hilma Hooker* become a permanent dive site. In August of 1984 it was towed to its present location and sunk.

*Wreck diving can be dangerous if not conducted properly. Unless you are an experienced wreck diver do not attempt this without a guide.*

A colorful variety of fish frequent these sites, including French angelfish, parrotfish, rock beauties, banded butterfly fish, scrawled as well as whitespotted filefish, black margates and schoolmaster snappers. Sting rays, garden eels and green moray eels have also been sighted here. Closer to the wreck you should find French grunts, mahogany and yellowtail snappers, large groupers and barracudas.

## Klein Bonaire

This uninhabited island on the leeward side of Bonaire features 24 dive sites at depths ranging from 20 to 130 feet. Many are shallow enough for snorkelers. Snorkelers can travel

to Klein Bonaire aboard the **Baka di Laman Water Taxi,** which departs from Karel's Beach Bar at 10 am and 2 pm. For information, 09-607126.

**SHARON'S SERENITY**
*Boat dive*
*Intermediate divers*
*Snorkelers*
Although the drop-off is very steep, the shallow portion of this dive on the southwestern coast is expansive, making it just as worthwhile for snorkelers. Staghorn corals and fast growing soft corals are prolific in the shallow waters. The reef crests at 30 feet, with mountainous star coral marking the drop-off. Tiger groupers and enormous jewfish make their home here, as do basket starfish, which are especially beautiful at night.

*Since the drop-off is extremely steep, it is imperative that divers monitor their depth carefully.*

**LEONORA'S REEF**
*Boat dive*
*Novice divers*
*Snorkelers*
Shallow water fish, including parrotfish, yellowtail snappers and four-eyed butterfly fish, are regulars at this site on the northwestern coast of Klein Bonaire. Corals include brain coral, mountainous star coral and fire coral, as well as a stand of black coral and pillar coral. Lizard fish often rest in the sand patches around the mooring, as do goatfish and school masters.

*Stay clear of the fire coral. Contact causes painful welts and burns.*

## Northern Tour

These sites are accessible from shore and can be combined with the Northern Tour of the island.

### WEBER'S JOY/WITCH'S HUT

*Shore/boat dive*
*Novice divers*
*Snorkelers*

In the shallow zone that extends out 100 feet from shore sloping to 30 feet, angelfish, rock beauties and butterfly fish swim among staghorn, finger and brain corals. Gorgonians, seawhips and mountainous star coral mark the drop-off.

Yellowmouth and tiger groupers frequent the cleaning stations provided by the tubastrea coral, which are also at the drop-off. The wall descends abruptly to 130 feet and is covered with purple tube, orange, and finger sponges.

### 1,000 STEPS

*Shore/boat dive*
*Novice divers*
*Snorkelers*

If you're determined not to leave Bonaire without seeing a hawksbill turtle, don't pass up this dive, as they are often sighted here. There's a lot to see in the shallow waters of this large cove, including schools of mahogany snappers, goatfish and schoolmasters in the area west of the moorings. Mountainous star coral soar to heights of up to 12 feet in the area surrounding the mooring buoy, while staghorn coral, brain coral, mustard hill coral and gorgonians dominate. Watch for manta rays, whale sharks, dolphins and other large

*Divers, if unsure whether you can carry your gear up and down this steep flight of steps, consider a boat dive here.*

sea creatures as you approach the drop-off. Pilot whales occasionally pass through during the winter months.

**OL'BLUE**
*Shore/boat dive*
*Novice to intermediate divers*
*Snorkelers*

This long coral beach up the coast from 1,000 Steps is within another protected cove. Great for snorkeling. French and queen angelfish abound along the reef shelf which, in just 20 feet of water, is overgrown with staghorn coral, seafans and other soft corals. Hard corals and gorgonians mark the crest at 25 feet. The wall descends to 150 feet. Finger corals are along the top, followed by mountainous star coral from 40 to 70 feet, and then sheet corals and wire corals to the bottom.

*Dive booties are a must for shore dives.*

Large boulders have toppled into the water on the eastern side of the cove, forming shelters that are favorite hiding spots of horse-eye jacks, tiger groupers and mahogany snappers.

## Washington-Slagbaai National Park

Bonaire's best snorkeling sites are in Washington-Slagbaii National Park. However, in deeper waters the current is very strong, making diving here a challenge and only recommended for experienced divers.

**BOCA SLAGBAAI**
*Boat/shore dive*
*Intermediate divers*
*Snorkelers*

Iguanas sunning themselves on the rocks along the shoreline keep a watchful eye on snorkelers in this large protected cove. While coral heads grow close to shore, tropical fish glide through the maze of seafans, staghorn and soft corals that grows on the sandy bottom at 25 feet, only to be replaced by horse-eye jacks, tiger groupers and school masters when the reef drops off at 40 feet. Hawksbill turtles, moray eels and barracudas are frequently spotted in deeper waters.

### PLAYA FUNCHI

*Shore dive*
*Advanced divers*
*Snorkelers*

Playa Funchi is one of Bonaire's best snorkeling sites. Elkhorn and staghorn corals abound along the shallow shelf until it drops off at around 135 feet out from shore. Midnight parrotfish and stingrays are often sighted in this area. Venturing out into deeper waters closer to the reef you should encounter creole wrasses, as well as bar jacks and horse-eye jacks. The current becomes quite strong at the wall face, which is relatively flat and dotted with just a few sponges and black corals.

## Extra Special: A Night Dive

### TOWN PIER

*Shore dive*
*Novice divers*

The night show is spectacular at the Town Pier. Moray eels swim past pilings covered with vivid bouquets formed by the polyps of orange tube coral that have extended to feed.

Sponge crabs are commonly sighted here at night and there's always a chance of an octopus or lobster wandering through. Daytime regulars that will probably stick around after dark include French grunts and angelfish, squirrelfish, rock beauties and trumpetfish, along with seahorses, frogfish, crabs and banded coral shrimp.

*Whether you dive here day or night, you must always check in with the harbor master before entering the water. For your safety, stay close to the bottom in order to avoid any unexpected boat traffic.*

### Extra Special For Snorkelers

**BONAIRE GUIDED SNORKELING**

Thanks to the island's Guided Snorkeling Program, snorkelers too can experience Bonaire's fascinating underwater eco-system in-depth, without ever having to put on a tank and regulator! All major dive shops participate in this series of 12 guided tours of snorkeling sites around the island. Each tour begins with a half-hour slide show preparing snorkelers for the wonders awaiting them below the sea. Tour arrangements should be made in advance, and may even be made prior to your arrival on Bonaire. Your hotel dive shop is almost certain to be participating. Inquire when making reservations.

## Fishing

Five minutes beyond the reefs, Bonaire's waters offer excellent deep sea and light tackle fishing. The catch varies by season, with marlin and sailfish most prevalent from November through February; dolphin from February to April; wahoo and amber jack from March to late June; and yellowfin and bonito from June through September.

Bonaire is also rated among the world's top bonefishing destinations, and its Blue Marlin Tournament has fast become one of the most popular fishing tournaments in the Caribbean.

There are several charter operations on the island, including **Captain Bob's "It's about Time"** ( 7070/fax 7071); **Club Nautico** ( 5800/fax 5850); and **Captain Chris Morkos of Piscatur Fishing** ( 8774/fax 4784).

## Sailing Charters

A sailing charter is another great way to take to the high seas. Constant winds and calm water are virtually guaranteed. Options range from snorkel trips to Klein Bonaire, beach barbecues and sunset sails, to customized charters with a certified divemaster.

*For more information on the Samur, see After Dark.*

*For customized itineraries, it's a good idea to contact Captain Robert before you arrive. Write to him at P.O. Box 348, Bonaire, N.A. or fax him at*

**Bonsail Charters** ( 607159, fax 5398) specializes in trips to the uninhabited islands off the coast of Venezuela which, in addition to offering great snorkeling, are home to the scarlet ibis and other wildlife. Trips aboard the ***Woodwind*** ( 8285), a 37-foot trimaran, feature guided snorkel tours of the reefs surrounding Bonaire complete with instruction and equipment, along with an open bar and snacks. Half-day snorkeling trips, as well as a full-day tour of the coast, are offered aboard the ***Samur*** ( 5433), an authentic Siamese junk.

Captain Robert (PADI divemaster) will plan a customized dive itinerary, including Bonaire

and the Venezuelan islands, for you and three friends aboard the ***Sea Witch*** ( 5433), a 56-foot ketch. An air compressor, tanks and weightbelts are on board.

## Sea Kayaking

Because the waters on that side of the island are so calm, kayaking is a relaxing and peaceful way to explore Bonaire's leeward coast. Plus Klein Bonaire is close enough that you can even paddle there for a picnic (don't forget your snorkel). Kayaks can be rented at several dive shops on the leeward coast.

Even more interesting are the mangroves in Lac Bay on the windward side of the island. This fascinating labyrinth is an aquatic nursery and a great spot for birdwatching. Half-and full-day kayak rentals are available at **Jibe City** ( 7363).

## Swimming

*With the exception of Lac Bay, do not attempt to swim on the windward side of the island.*

Though the long, uninterrupted white sandy beaches featured in Caribbean travel posters are noticeably absent on Bonaire, the island does have some lovely beaches on its leeward and southern coasts. The gradual slope from shallow to deep water, combined with the usually gentle currents and absence of an undertow, create relatively safe conditions for swimming, provided the appropriate precautions are taken. With everyone else off diving or exploring Washington-Slagbaai, you are likely to have the beach almost all to yourself.

Bonaire's finest beaches are **Pink Beach** (no amenities); **Playa Lechi** at the Sunset Hotel (toilets, a restaurant and water sport rentals); **Sorobon Beach**, which is owned by the Sorobon Beach Resort, a naturalist resort at Lac Bay ($15 admission, sunbathing "au naturel," toilets, a restaurant and equipment rentals at Jibe City Bonaire next door); and the beach at **Cai** on the northern tip of Lac Bay, where there is a lively, family-style beach party every Sunday afternoon.

## Windsurfing

*Only experienced boardsailors should attempt the open waters outside the bay.*

Windsurfing conditions on Lac Bay are as close to perfect as you'll find anywhere. Constant tradewinds blow in from the east at 20-25 knots from January to August and 15-20 knots from August through September. Daily temperatures are in the low 80s both in the water and out. Beginners will appreciate the clear, shallow and smooth waters of the bay, while those in search of a challenge can venture outside the bay to ride the long waves of the open sea.

Ernst van Vliet's **Windsurfing Bonaire/Jibe City** offers instruction for sailors of all levels, beginner to advanced, along with state-of-the-art equipment, including production and custom boards. Afterwards, you can trade stories with your fellow surfers at the "Hang Out Bar." Mr. van Vliet will also provide transportation to and from your hotel. Advance reservations are requested and should be made before 8:30 am of the same day ( /fax 011-599-7-5363/7363).

For more information and/or to make advance arrangements, call or fax Mr. van Vliet or drop him a card at P.O. Box 301, Bonaire N.A.

## Biking

With over 180 miles of trails, including goat paths and unpaved roads, biking is a great way to experience Bonaire's natural beauty. Bring along your snorkel gear, a picnic lunch, and plenty of water and sunscreen, and make a day of it. Trek Bicycles are available for rent at **Cycle Bonaire**, Kaya L.D. Gerharts 11D ( 7558/fax 7690). Guided tours can be arranged as well.

*See the Northern and Southern tours for suggested routes.*

## To The Top Of Seru Largo

From the observation point at the top of Seru Largo, a hill in the center of the island opposite the Water Desalination Plant, you can see south to the saltpans and west to Klein Bonaire. On a clear day you may even be able to make out Curaçao's Christoffelberg in the distance. Seru Largo is also a great place to be at sunset.

To get to Seru Largo follow the main road north until you reach the turn-off for Seru Largo, which is opposite the water desalination plant. Hike, bike or drive your way up. You can either park your car at the base of the hill or keep driving. It's a steady, though fairly gradual, climb to the top along paved roads. Rugged walkers may find a few shortcuts.

## A Day At A Ranch

*Kunuku is Papiamentu for ranch.*

If you've come to Bonaire with the kids and would like a break from the water, **Kunuku Warahama, Bonaire Riding Academy and Club** is a terrific alternative.

A working ranch since the beginning of this century, now Warahama Ranch is not only a riding school but a living museum dedicated to the preservation of Bonaire's agricultural traditions. There is a petting zoo, a playground and pony rides for young children, while older kids, adults too, can take an hour-long trail ride through the ranch and learn about the wild and domestic animals and indigenous foliage found on Bonaire. At last count, there were 300 goats, 24 cows and enough chickens to produce 25 dozen eggs a day on Warahama. Plans are in the works to cultivate the fields at the entrance. The ranch hopes to produce much of the food served in its restaurant before too long.

*Reservations for the trail ride must be made 24 hours in advance. 5558 or 09-607217.*

*Call ahead to make sure that the horses will be performing when you visit. A dinner show with folkloric dancing is planned for Wednesday and Saturday nights.*

The Warahama's outdoor restaurant is definitely unique. Barbecue-type fare and local favorites are served, with entertainment provided by Paso Fino horses from Colombia. From time to time throughout the evening, horses and riders will perform in a ring surrounding the dining area, while the Master of Ceremonies tells the audience about the horse and the movement being performed.

Kunuku Warahama is owned and managed by former Deputy of Tourism Ramoncito Booi, who inherited it from his grandparents. When we visited, Mr. Booi was restoring his

grandparents' home to make it part of the museum.

## Nature Tour

Klaas Bakker, a Dutch biologist/dive instructor, who has been living in the Antilles since 1978, offers a weekly eco-excursion through Washington-Slagbaai National Park, with several snorkel stops and visits to several little known locations throughout the island. Specialized tours can be arranged. Group size is limited to seven persons and reservations must be made with Mr. Bakker in advance ( 7714). Lunch and admission to the park is included and the excursion lasts from approximately 9 am to 6 pm.

## Tennis

Tennis courts are available at the Divi Flamingo Beach Resort and Casino, the Sand Dollar Beach Club and the Sunset Beach Hotel. Courts at the Sand Dollar and Sunset Beach are lighted. Courts should be reserved ahead of time with the front desk. Given the strong midday sun, you should plan on playing either in the early morning or late afternoon.

## Bonaire's Flamingos

Bonaire is one of the few remaining nesting places in the world for pink flamingos. Over the last century the number of breeding grounds for the southern Caribbean flamingo

*The other three breeding grounds are found on Great Inagua, Cuba and the Yucatan.*

have decreased from 30 to four. Man has driven these shy birds dangerously close to extinction, indirectly with the noise of boats and planes and directly by hunting and collecting their eggs. At one point Bonaire's flamingo population had dwindled to 1,500.

Now, thanks to the efforts of Azko Nobel Salt Antilles, N.V., Bonaire's flamingo population is on the rise, with a recent estimate putting their number at 15,000. Shortly after their arrival, the folks at Azko Nobel became determined to save Bonaire's flamingos. Consulting with environmentalists and ornithologists and using their own funds to lease the land from the government, they established the 137½-acre sanctuary in **Pekelmeer**.

*The Southern Tour of the island will take you past Pekelmeer.*

Pekelmeer is one of the largest flamingo sanctuaries in the western hemisphere and the only nesting ground on Bonaire. In some years over 3,000 pairs of flamingos have nested in the marshes within the confines of the sanctuary. A flamingo nest measures two feet across the bottom. The sides are 12-15 inches high with concave tops, which the flamingos form by using their beaks to smooth the mud. Each nest holds just one egg. Because nesting flamingos are extremely sensitive to noise and other disturbances, access to the sanctuary is stricly forbidden. However, it is usually possible to see them from the road outside the sanctuary.

While Bonaire's flamingos nest exclusively in Pekelmeer, they feed in the saltpans at Goto

and Slagbaii. However, even all three areas combined do not produce enough food to support an entire colony. So many of the flamingos fly to Venezuela, either to the peninsula of Paraguaná which is 96 miles away or to Chichiriviche, which is closer – a mere 72 miles away. As for how they feed, their long necks certainly come in handy. While walking or swimming, a flamingo forages for food by running its bill upside down along the sandy bottom of the saltpan. Moving its head back and forth, the flamingo filters out the larvae of the brine flies and brine shrimp, along with algae, fungi and bacteria that it has stirred up.

*Field glasses or binoculars will come in handy. Remember to keep quiet and avoid*

*Goto and Slagbaii are included in the Northern Tour of the island.*

Not only do the algae and bacteria growing in the saltpans turn the water a reddish color, they are also responsible for the brilliant pink plumage of Bonaire's flamingos. The algae and bacteria produce carotenoids, pigments related to carotene, which the flamingos assimilate when they eat them. Thanks to their diet, the Caribbean flamingos have the brightest plumage of all six species of flamingos.

## Touring The Island

(By Car Or Bike)

### Southern Tour

The southern portion of the island can easily be toured by car in under two hours. However, we urge you to set aside an afternoon in order to enjoy all it has to offer – sightseeing,

snorkeling and diving, windsurfing at Lac Bay, flamingo watching at the Azko Nobel sanctuary, and just hanging out at the beach. Divers should incorporate the southern portion of the island into their diving agenda since most of Bonaire's shore dives are along the route. The same holds true for snorkelers.

This portion of the island is relatively flat and ideal for cycling. Just be sure to wear a hat, and bring plenty of sunscreen and water, since there is very little protection from the sun. Whether you're travelling by bike or by auto, the route will be the same.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

Flamingo watching at the Azko Nobel Sanctuary in Pekelmeer.

Snorkeling at Bachelor's Beach or exploring the *Hilma Hooker* (experienced wreck divers only!).

The Azko Nobel Salt Works, including the slave huts at Witte Pan and Rode Pan.

Windsurfing or sea kayaking on Lac Bay.

Hanging out at Pink Beach.

**GETTING READY**

Our tour starts at the Town Pier in Kralendijk. Before heading out, you may want to stop off at the Cultimara supermarket in town and pack a picnic lunch. Purchase fresh fruit from the Venezuelan vendors at the fishmarket just a few steps away from the pier. Laden with fresh fruits and vegetables, they sail in from Venezuela and stay for the

*The Town Pier is a popular dive site, especially for night diving. Prior permission from the harbor master is re-*

week or until they're sold out, whichever comes first.

Heading southwards along the coast on Kaya Charles E.B. Hellmund, you'll pass **Fort Orange**, located just on the edge of town. Although not large by any standard, and hidden among the other buildings that have sprung up around it, Fort Orange was surely quite impressive in its day. It dates back to the mid-17th century when, formidably armed with four cannons, it protected the island from hostile invaders (thankfully a non-occurrence) while serving as a government center and depot for incoming and outgoing goods, as well as a prison. It was also the residence of the commander of the island until 1837. The stone lighthouse that towers over the fort was built in 1932 to replace the original wooden tower built in 1868. Formerly the home of Bonaire's police force and fire brigade, now Fort Orange is exclusively home to the island's *Haven Kantoor*, Harbor Office.

As you drive or bike along, keep a loo out for the small yellow boulders along the side of the road. Easily missed, they serve as markers for dive sites. Each bears the name of the site it is marking in black letters.

*At the time of this writing, the Dutch government was working on a design for larger signs, taking care that they be as attractive and unobtrusive as possible. Hence, the yellow markers may have been replaced by the time you visit Bonaire.*

Just outside town you'll come to **Bachelor's Beach**, an especially good site for snorkeling. You'll climb down a ladder about six feet to a small beach. Looking out upon the turquoise water, you can easily see the reef from shore. Highlights include brain coral, and a great

variety of colorful tropical fish including blue fish, sand fish, parrot fish and tiger fish.

Divers will want to check out ***Hilma Hooker***, just south of Bachelor's Beach. Easily accessible from shore, this is a popular wreck site, named for a boat that had been used to smuggle drugs onto the island and was confiscated by the government in August 1984.

*Azko Nobel Salt is the world's largest producer of solar salt, with annual production of over 400,000 tons.*

In the distance as you continue onwards, you'll see blinding white hills of what almost looks like snow. These are actually the stockpiles of solar salt produced by **Azko Nobel**, the Dutch company now operating the saltworks after many years of abandonment.

That large structure stretching across the road to the sea houses a U-shaped conveyor belt, along which the unprocessed salt is transported to an awaiting ship. In slave times there was a different system. Three obelisks, one red, one white and the third blue, were placed along the shore in 1838 to guide the salt ships to their moorings. When a ship was expected, a colored flag would be raised to indicate which mooring the ship should head to. Once it was anchored, slaves would load the salt.

On the inland side as you drive along, take a look at what appear to be a series of shallow bogs varying in color from green to brown to near-pink. These are the saltpans that have been put back into operation by Azko Salt. Sea water is released into the pans through a series of channels running inland from the

sea. The water evaporates, leaving salt behind. The different colors represent the varying stages of evaporation, with the pinkish color being the final stage just before complete evaporation when only the white salt remains.

Just beyond the hills of salt you'll come upon a group of low-lying white stucco huts. Not more than five feet high, these are the slave huts of **Witte Pan.** After working in the pans all day long, the slaves would literally crawl inside on their hands and knees since the doorway is not tall enough to enter otherwise, and spend the night five or six slaves to a hut. Not surprisingly, the huts were used exclusively for sleeping. Most of the slaves had families in the village of Rincon and would walk 20 miles each way to spend the weekend there.

*As you drive, you'll see the remains of walls from many of the original salt-pans.*

Witte Pan marks the entrance to **Pink Beach**, the longest expanse of beach on the island. Although not very wide and you do walk through coral rocks to reach the beach, it features fine white sand and is a popular spot for swimming and sunning. However, there is no shade and no facilities so you should bring an umbrella and plenty to drink as the sun is quite strong. The beach is also popular with brown pelicans.

*Snorkeling and diving are possible here, although you do need to swim out a fair distance from shore.*

Continuing southwards beyond Pink Beach you'll pass several small huts. Formerly fishermen's homes, these are now primarily used as weekend getaways by Bonaireans. You are now approaching the southernmost point on

*Only experts should dive here. Should you opt to dive, head out towards the buoy and keep watch for dive boats.*

the island, which is marked by the **Willemstoren Lighthouse.** Just before reaching the lighthouse, you'll come upon a second series of slave huts, this time a faded red color. This area is known as **Rode Pan** (or Red Pan) and is the site of the **Red Slave** dive site, which is accessible by shore or boat.

As the lighthouse comes into view, take note of the sea, which becomes progressively rougher. The sea tends to be wild on the northern side of the island and, with the exception of Lac Bay, is unsafe for swimming and diving. The rocky shores are almost foreboding, full of driftwood, coral and debris – including a surprising number of old sneakers – carried in by the pounding surf. The stone walls along the side of the road were built to prevent the surf from washing across the road. Also in this area is the inlet where the salt company lets the seawater in and then pumps it into the saltpans.

Within the salt works, just beyond the Willemstoren Lighthouse in the area of saltflats known a**s Pekelmeer**, is the **137½-acre flamingo sanctuary**. It was created by Azko Nobel on land it leases from the Bonairean government in order to protect the flamingos and their eggs. The flamingos have made their nesting ground on the marshes within the salt works. Though the public is prohibited from entering the area, it is possible to see flamingos from the road. Just be quiet and avoid sudden movements since these shy birds are easily frightened. Though predominantly pink, you can see their black

underwings when they take flight. Just like an airplane, they need to get a running start.

*Pekelmeer is one of the largest flamingo sanctuaries in the Western Hemisphere.*

Continuing northwards, you'll come to **Sorobon Beach** at the southern edge of **Lac Bay.** Nature lovers and windsurfers should plan on spending time here. Beyond the sand beach is an area of mangroves and seagrass beds making Lac a popular breeding ground for many different marine animals and birds. Its secluded location also makes it ideal for the **Sorobon Beach Resort**, a naturalist getaway. Since the beach is clothing-optional, you may need extra sun screen. Because of its sheltered location, the waters here are relatively calm and crystal clear, ideal for swimming, snorkeling and windsurfing, though too shallow for diving. Beyond the beach, mangroves cover the coast here, making it a popular spot for birdwatching and just plain eco-touring (not to mention mosquitoes.)

*Sorobon Beach is private. There is a $15 admission fee. Facilities include the Red Pelican Restaurant at the Lac Bay Resort.*

Next door to the Sorobon is the very funky **Jibe City Windsurfing** run by the amiable Dutchman Ernst van Vliet. He is capitalizing on the shallow waters and constant breeze that make Lac Bay ideal for windsurfing. Van Vliet offers classes for beginning as well as experienced windsurfers. He also rents out sea kayaks and offers tours through the mangroves.

*It's a good idea to call ahead to schedule a lesson or reserve equipment. 7363.*

Take note of the changing vegetation as you drive along. Inland, it is very dry, dominated by short scrubby trees and bushes and lots of cacti. There are two types. One is used to make soup and is called kadushi. The other,

yatu, is used for fences, and if you look carefully you'll notice that many of the residents have done just that. All they do is cut the cactus off and replant it where they want a fence. The fences are used to keep out the goats you'll see wandering around here and throughout the island. The goats are joined by wild donkeys.

*Drivers beware: Goats and donkeys have been the cause of more than a few accidents on Bonaire.*

Just beyond Sorobon and Jibe City you'll come to a large clearing along the water and a cluster of three circular buildings, only one of which is finished. Formerly the shell of an unfinished hotel that was started 30 years ago, the building was bought by a local entrepreneur, who has turned it into the Fanatic Nightclub. Check to see if it's open when you visit. This area also serves as a sort of make-shift boat yard and a landing point for some of the local fishermen. This clearing also marks the beginning of the mangroves.

Turn off at the dirt road **Kaminda Cai** (Road to Cai), the last stop on our southern tour. **Cai** is a small fishing village on the northern point of the entrance to Lac Bay. En route, the landscape is almost marshy, with a great variety of vegetation and birds, including hummingbirds. Oddly enough, you'll also see cactuses. A closer look will reveal that you're driving alongside mangroves. Unless you're in Bonaire during the rainy months, it may not be apparent at first glance. You'll also pass some abandoned saltpans. Keep a lookout for flamingos. The private homes you'll pass along the way all have their own generators for both water and electricity.

As you near Cai you'll see conch shells piled up alongside the road. A sandy beach and calm waters make Cai an especially good destination for families with small children. Sunday afternoon is a great time to visit. The weekly beach party kicks off at around 3 pm, with plenty of food and music provided by Magic Sound.

*Remember that it is no longer legal to pick conch in Bonaire.*

*Cai's Sunday afternoon beach party is popular with tourists and locals!*

To get back to Kralendijk, take the dirt road to the main street and follow the signs.

## Northern Tour

The northern part of the island can also be toured by bike or car. The great many paths that branch off the main road towards the sea and then back again to the caves on the inland side make biking the more interesting option. Should you opt to bike, keep in mind that this part of the island is not only greener and more densely forested than the south, but it is also hillier. The northern tour of the island is easily combined with a visit to Washington-Slagbaai National Park. Unfortunately, this option will rule out biking, since visitors may only tour the park by car.

*Bikers should ask for a trail map or at least some recommendations when they rent their bikes.*

**HIGHLIGHTS**

The flamingos at Gotomeer and Playa Frans.

Snorkeling or diving at the Thousand Steps and Nukove Beach.

Arawak Indian inscriptions at Boca Onima.

Stopping for ice cream at Prisca's in Rincon.

**GETTING READY**

Snorkelers and divers will want to pack their gear since several of the best shore dives are along this route. As always, be sure to bring plenty of water and sunscreen as well as a hat. A picnic lunch is not a bad idea either.

For convenience sake, we'll start off in downtown Kralendijk on Kaya Grandi, which runs in a northerly direction to become Kaya Gobernador Debrot as it heads out of town.

*If you're staying in one of the hotels on the main drag north of town, start at your hotel.*

Just past Captain Don's Habitat is the Water Desalination Plant, which supplies much of the island with not only fresh water but electricity as well. Soon you'll come to a part of Bonaire that has only just begun to be developed. This area has been strictly reserved for private residences. Well-to-do Bonaireans, many of whom are Dutch, are resettling in the developments here. In fact, the main road, which originally ran along the coast, was shifted inland in order to create oceanfront properties.

*Hotels are not permitted in this area.*

The homes are nearly as lovely as the setting itself. Modern Caribbean-style villas have been wisely designed to maximize the views provided by the gently rolling hills. All are set within beautifully landscaped gardens cared for by none other than Captain Don, who has traded in his diving gear for landscaper's tools. Translating his philosophy to the soil, he has created gardens that are as natural as the marine life he has dedicated much of his life to protecting.

Continuing onward, the road cuts back toward the coast and you'll travel along a cliff overlooking the turquoise waters of the Caribbean. The water is so clear that in some places you'll be able to see the reef from above as well as brightly colored parrot fish, angel fish and the other fish that inhabit Bonaire's reef. Looking down or inland from the cliff, you'll realize that you are actually driving alongside a coral ridge, attesting to the fact that much of Bonaire was originally underwater. Note too that much of the coral has been burned black by the sun. In fact, throughout the drive you will often see this burnt coral.

*We once drove this route the morning after a steady rain had fallen throughout much of the night. Water was running down the coral formations along the side of the road. The vegetation was at its greenest, and flowers were starting to bloom.*

Shortly after leaving the coral ridge, you'll pass the ruins of a scout's house on the inland side of the road. In former times, this area was home to several large farms, and the goatherds lived in homes such as this one. Throughout the northern portion you will see the remains of the stone walls built by the farmers to separate their plantations. In addition to raising goats, they cultivated aloe and the divi-divi – its tannin-laden fruit exported to Holland for use in the tanneries. Just a few yards away from here is the old dirt road that leads to the village of Rincon, our final destination before returning to Kralendijk. The hut is also the landmark for the dive site known as **Witches Hut** or **Weber's Joy.**

Further on you'll soon come to the dive site popularly known as the **Thousand Steps**, although its proper name is *Trapi*. Located

*Divers can park their cars alongside the road while diving. Just be sure to lock the car doors.*

across from the towers of Radio Nederlande, this site gets its name from the steep stone staircase that leads down to the water. Although there are really fewer than 70 steps in all, they seem like 1,000 when you are carrying dive equipment.

Continuing, you'll pass the coral formation known as **The Devil's Mouth**, which is on the inland side of the road. During the colonial period the plantation owners would often threaten the slaves, telling them that they would be fed to the devil if they did not work hard enough. The Indians were much more romantic. They believed that if a young girl wanted to find her true love she had only to sit among the coral and he would come to her. Nowadays, if you look carefully you may see mountain goats there instead.

Moving on, you'll come to the BOPEC Oil Terminal. BOPEC, which was founded in 1975, is an affiliate of Petroleos de Venezuela S.A., a Venezuelan oil company. This terminal on Bonaire's northwestern coast is the company's only deepwater port. Turn onto the dirt road beside the terminal and follow it past the small saltwater lake, which is actually a section of **Goto Lake**.

*Gotomeer is the starting point for the flamingos' much touted sunset flight to Venezuela.*

This area, known as **Gotomeer**, is Bonaire's most beautiful inland region and one of the best places on the island for flamingo watching. Along with Slagbaai, it is an important feeding ground for the island's flamingo population, especially from January to July during the breeding season. Since the saliñas don't

provide enough food to support an entire colony, the flamingos also fly to the Venezuelan peninsula, known as Paraguaná, as well as to Chichiriviche, on the Venezuelan coast, due south of Bonaire. However, while they do come north to feed, Bonaire's flamingos breed almost exclusively in the flamingo sanctuary at the southern end of the island.

As you proceed along the dirt road, you'll come to a small road marked **Nukove Beach**. This is a fine snorkeling and dive site (accessible by both boat and shore), and a favorite gathering place for parrot fish. The large clearing at the end of the main road is **Playa Frans,** a small fishing colony where you are almost guaranteed to see flamingos in the saltpans (*Saliña Frans).* If you are quiet enough, you may even be able to get fairly close to the shy birds. Return to the dirt road and trace your steps back to the oil terminal, where you should return to the main road.

The road now becomes the **Kaminda Goto,** or "Road to Goto." Fantastic views overlooking Goto Lake, with Brandaris Hill in the background, have earned it a second name, Panorama Road. You'll soon find yourself driving right alongside the shores of Lake Goto. The orange coral growing along the shoreline is clearly visible, even from your car window. Follow the road to the observation point or *mirador,* which is on a hill overlooking the lake and its many islands. Several are inhabited by farmers, who grow sorghum during Bonaire's short rainy season. Sand-

pipers and flamingos number among the other Gotomeer residents.

*The vegetation is quite thick in this area, yet you will still see plenty of cacti. For many farmers, the ranchos have become a major part of their livelihood. The growing season is limited to the island's short rainy season.*

A little beyond the Observation Point, the paved road turns east. You are now travelling through the greenest section of the island, an area known as **Dos Pos** or Two Wells. Green all year round, it's the only region where there is ground water close to the surface. This should explain why the largest tree on the island, the tamarind, is able to grow here. Several of the farmers in this area supplement their incomes by opening *ranchos*, such as the Ticurius Bar-n-Grill. These outdoor restaurants operate primarily on the weekends and are very popular for large gatherings.

Mountain bikers may want to venture through the countryside along some of the dirt roads in this area.

*The crest of this hill is called "Para Mira" or Stop and Look.*

Continuing along the paved road, you'll climb to the crest of a hill, where you will be greeted by a postcard view of the village of Rincon. The oldest village on Bonaire, it was founded by the slaves who worked in the saltpans, and was strategically positioned within the hills rather than on the coast so that marauding pirates would not know of its existence. The church dominates your view of the village and a religious shrine, the Gruta di Lourdes, is not far from where you are standing.

Take some time to stroll through the village and get a feel for the daily life of its people. Rincon has around 3,000 residents, many of

whom work in Kralendijk. It also has its own post office and police station, both of which are open for a few hours every day, except Sunday. You'll probably pass the monument to Julio Abraham, a key figure in the village and the island's history. Before you leave, be sure to stop at **Prisca's** and sample what residents proudly proclaim to be the best ice cream in the Caribbean. There is a branch of **Cozzoli's Pizza** here if you'd like to stop for lunch.

After leaving Rincon, follow the road marked **Boca Onima**. Shortly you'll come to a small inlet where the waves come crashing in against the rocks. Opposite the inlet is the beginning of a trail (driving or walking) past a series of Arawak Indian inscriptions that were painted onto the coral overhangs several centuries ago. The original inhabitants of Bonaire, the Arawaks, quickly departed for Venezuela upon the arrival of the Dutch and Spanish, who tried to enslave them. Experts have been unable to determine the meaning of the inscriptions or much of their history. There are many brasilwood trees in this area, along with the local palo de silla, the wood of which is used to make kitchen utensils.

*Streets in Rincon are named after fruits and vegetables.*

Following the signs to return to Kralendijk, you'll pass through the villages of **Noord di Saliña** and **Antriol**. Noord di Saliña is located on the site of the original Indian village and the street names are Indian. Antriol, the largest village on the island, is divided into two sections: *Pa Ariba*, Upper Part, and *Pa*

*Abajo,* Lower Part. The streets here are named after fish.

## Washington-Slagbaai National Park

*Since it is imperative that divers wait 24 hours after their last dive before flying, they may want to save a visit to Washington-Slagbaai for their last day in Bonaire. Luckily, most of Bonaire's best snorkelling spots are within the park.*

This 13,500-acre game preserve, covering nearly all of the northwestern portion of the island, was the first of its kind in the Netherlands Antilles. With landscape varying from fields of cactus and low-lying mesquite trees, divi-divis sculpted by the tradewinds, abandoned aloe plantations and secluded bays, to an underwater wonderland of corals, sponges and colorful tropical fish, a day spent exploring this park is sure to be one of the highlights of your visit to Bonaire.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

Snorkeling at Playa Bengé and Playa Funchi.

Birdwatching at Pos di Mangel and Put Bronswinkel.

Panoramic view from the top of Brandaris Hill.

The three-foot iguanas between Playa Funchi and Boca Slagbaai.

A picnic lunch at Boca Cocolishi

**DURATION**

One day is optimal; can be visited in a half-day as well.

**ADMISSION**

$3 U.S. (NAFL 5) – less for kids under 15.

**HISTORY OF THE PARK**

Washington-Slagbaai owes its existence to the generosity and foresight of two of Bonaire's earliest residents. You may remember that in the introduction we mentioned that when the Dutch government took control of Bonaire in 1636, they operated the island as a large plantation. Since most of the labor was supplied by slaves brought over from Africa and the neighboring islands, when the Emancipation regulation was passed in 1862, it became too costly for the Dutch government to continue operating such a large tract of land. That part of the island now occupied by the park was divided into two tracts of land, Brasiel and Slagbaai, and was sold several times over.

In 1892 the land was sold to Jean Luis Cadieres and Jean Jacques Debrot. Debrot subdivided Slagbaai, the northern portion of the land, into two lots and sold the northernmost portion to the Herrera brothers. The Herreras converted their land into a plantation and, along with raising goats, cultivated aloe and divi-divi trees, and produced charcoal. They eventually named the land "Washington" and prospered from the 1940's until 1967. Then the last of the family, Julio Caesar Herrera, who had run the plantation since 1936, passed away.

Luckily, Julio had the foresight to prevent the exploitation of the land upon his death by negotiating its sale to the Netherlands Antilles government under the express condition that it remain in its natural state. The govern-

ment fulfilled its end of the agreement. In 1969 Washington became the first wildlife sanctuary in the Netherlands Antilles.

*STINAPA, the Netherlands Antilles National Parks Foundation, was established to acquire, preserve and protect natural areas both on land and sea and to make them accessible to the public for educational and recreational use.*

Shortly thereafter the government began a campaign to purchase the Slagbaai Plantation. Finally, owner J.H.R. Beaujon agreed to the sale, once again requiring that the land only be used as a national park. In 1976, following Beaujon's death, the sale of the Slagbaai Plantation to the Netherlands Antilles National Park Foundation (STINAPA) was consummated and the Washington/Slagbaai National Park was founded. In 1979 the government gave Brasiel Plantation, including the land surrounding Goto Lake, to STINAPA to run and protect as part of the park.

**GETTING READY**

Since the only way to visit the park is by car, you'll have to rent one if you haven't already. Four-wheel-drive vehicles are best, although not a necessity. Before setting off, make sure you have a good spare tire along with a working jack, since you will be travelling on dirt roads. While it is possible to see the park in half a day, we recommend that you set aside a full day to make the most of your visit. This will give you plenty of time for an oceanside picnic as well as snorkeling, birdwatching and, for the most hardy among you, climbing Brandaris Hill.

Be sure to bring plenty of water and sunscreen (a hat is always a good idea too), along with comfortable and sturdy footwear

and your snorkeling gear. Birdwatchers should not forget their field glasses and a fieldguide if they have one.

**GETTING THERE**

Follow the road to Rincon and watch for the green signs directing you to the park. You'll soon reach Kaya Gilberto R.E. Herrera, an unpaved road on the lefthand side that leads to the park entrance.

*Bonaire's only public phone is located just outside the entrance to the park. It serves the families who live near there.*

**TOURING THE PARK**

The park service has laid out two routes for touring the park. The 21-mile (40-kilometer) **Yellow Route** is the longer of the two. It covers all of the highlights of the park, traveling along the northern coast, through much of the Washington section as well as Slagbaai and the Panorama Road in Brasiel, which is discussed in our Northern Tour. If your time is limited and you are especially interested in snorkeling, we suggest you follow the **Green Route,** which will take you west through the middle of the park past the Brandaris Hill to Playa Funchi and Boca Slagbaai where it overlaps the Yellow Route for a short distance before heading east back to the entrance.

To better introduce you to park sites, we will follow the Yellow Route. Directions for the Green Route are in the margins.

Just after entering the park you'll drive through a field of aloe, cacti and low shrub-like trees. If you look carefully, you should notice that there are a few different types of cacti, including the fruit-bearing

prickly pear. The taller candle cacti are called **yatu** and **kadushi** by the locals and are easily distinguished from one another by their shape and the arrangement of their thorns. The kadushi, which is the main ingredient in a popular soup of the same name, is taller and branches out a few feet above the ground, much like a tree. The yatu grows straight up and down, branching out very close to the ground. The yatu's thorns are tightly spaced together while those of the kadushi grow in small star-shaped bunches. Because it takes root very quickly, the yatu is used to make fences, which the Bonaireans have found to be quite effective in keeping goats off their property.

*If the aloe is in bloom when you visit, watch for the many different types of birds that come to drink the nectar, including bananaquits, blue-tailed emeralds and ruby topaz hummingbirds.*

Just beyond the entrance is **Saliña Matijs**. When flooded, the saltpans come alive with waterfowl, including flamingos, sandpipers and black-winged stilts, along with several different types of ducks. You might even see an occasional Bahamas pintail. Otherwise, it is a vast arid plain dotted with divi-divi trees.

*Saliña means saltpan.*

After turning to the north coast, you'll come to **Playa Chikitu**. Don't be deceived by the seemingly idyllic water; a strong undertow makes swimming here extremely dangerous and not recommended. Instead, busy yourself looking for fossil shells and coral formations in the limestones that form Boca Chikitu, the small inlet. Sand dunes have formed here thanks to the extensive root system of the creeping crab grass that holds the sand in place. The small white flowers you may see

*Instead of turning toward the north coast, the Green Route continues west towards Playa Funchi on the leeward side of the island. Brandaris Hill and Put Bronswinkel (see below) are along this route.*

blooming on the dunes are seaside lavender, while the yellow ones are Suriana Maritima.

Studying the limestone terraces of **Seru Grandi** will give you a general idea of how the island of Bonaire was formed. This series of three terraces of increasing height, the lowest of which you drive across, were formed during the Ice Age when the sea rose and fell as ice melted in the polar regions. The highest of the three, estimated to be one million years old, emerged when the sea level dropped from as much as 250 feet above its present level.

The middle terrace is somewhere between 340,000 and 510,000 years old. Geologists believe it was deposited during a rise in the sea level that coincided with the melting of the polar ice during an interglacial period. The lowest terrace is believed to have formed around 125,000 years ago.

Stand back from the large red boulder at the foot of Seru Grandi (on the opposite side) and study it carefully. Eventually you should be able to make out an Indian's face formed by the holes and indentations in the rock. Hence its name, **Cara Corrá**, which means "red face" in Papiamentu. Between the boulders to the right of Cara Corrá are the remains of an old goat corral. This area of the park belonged to the Washington Plantation. Descendants of the goats raised back then graze here just as their ancestors did.

A footpath to the left of Cara Corrá leads to the top of Seru Grandi, where there is a lovely

view of the Sabana and a small ranch in the distance. You'll need to wear more than sandals or light tennis shoes, since much of the limestone on the middle terrace is deeply pock-marked and quite jagged in places. The climb to the top of the third terrace can be tricky. You'll have to do some hand-over-hand rock-climbing.

If you are ready to get your feet wet or spend some quiet time relaxing, the secluded beach at **Boca Cocolishi**, the next destination along the Yellow Route, will provide a welcome break. Formed as a series of terraces just like Ceru Grandi, the beach and shallow bay are located on the middle terrace, which is hidden by the highest terrace. The lowest terrace is still under water. A ridge of calcareous algae between it and the middle terrace serves double duty, marking the step to the middle terrace as well as forming a barrier that prevents the surf from spilling over onto its shallow basin and beach. No matter how rough the sea may be, the water in the pool is almost always calm; and, since it is no more than three feet deep, it's great for kids.

*The algae growing along the ridge creates a tough layer that not only protects the ridge from erosion caused by the constant pounding of the surf, but also turns it a lovely shade of pink.*

Since *cocolishi* means shell in Papiamentu, it shouldn't surprise you that the black sand beach was formed by bits of coral, mollusks and other shells. Just as appropriately named is **Ceru Bentana**, which gets its name from the window-shaped rock formation at the top of the hill. With or without the window, the hill offers a fine view across the Sabana. There is also a lighthouse here. At this point the road turns inland and you'll soon notice

that the vegetation is becoming thicker, while the soil has taken on a reddish color due to its high iron content.

As you approach the leeward side of the island you'll come to **Saliña Bartol**. This is a popular feeding ground for flamingos, although you will only be able to see them at a distance. Birdwatchers will want to follow the road marked **Pos di Mangel**, one of Bonaire's best birdwatching sites and one of the only places in the park where water is available all year long. Bananaquits, tropical mockingbirds, black-faced grassquits and yellow warblers are commonly seen here, along with several different varieties of flycatchers. More timid and therefore a little harder to spot, are the scaly-naped pigeons, bare-eyed pigeons, the eared dove and the white fronted dove.

As long as you don't visit during the breeding season, which lasts from April to July, you may be lucky enough to hear, if not actually spot, a lora, the yellow-winged parrot found only on Bonaire. The lora is easily recognized by its bright green and yellow head and high-pitched cry, which distinguish it from the more numerous parakeets, with their bright orange head and harsher cry. Both birds have been legally protected on Bonaire since 1931. Unfortunately, they still frequently fall prey to smugglers, who take them to Aruba and Curaçao where they are sold as pets.

An equally serious threat to the lora and the parakeet, both of which are fruit eaters, are the droughts that occur on Bonaire every six or seven years. With their food supply in the wild diminished due to this lack of water, they often feed in the gardens of island residents, running the risk of being captured and sold as pets. Many simply die of starvation. Sadly, the lora is currently threatened with extinction.

After returning to the main road, you'll drive between **Saliña Bartol** and the sea to **Boca Bartol**, another small inlet. If you look across the inlet from the northernmost edge of the Boca you may see a yellow-crowned night heron on the opposite side. Snowy egrets are also frequently sighted here, as are pelicans, cormorants and brown boobies.

Continuing onwards in a southerly direction, you'll soon reach the turn-off to **Playa Bengé**, widely held as one of the finest snorkeling spots on Bonaire and also a great place to stop for a picnic. The best snorkeling is along the northern side of the bay where there are a great many coral groves and spurs, and the average depth is seven meters. In addition to or because of the corals, the bay boasts a wide variety of fish. Osprey are also known to frequent this area.

*Avid hikers and birdwatchers may want to follow the Green Route inland to Subi Brandaris and Put Bronswinkel before or in lieu of going to Playa Funchi. Both will be discussed below.*

Just beyond Playa Bengé, the Green Route meets the Yellow. The two overlap, heading west toward the coast and **Playa Funchi**. Enroute to the beach you'll pass a field of yatu cactus, along with low-lying prickly pears and

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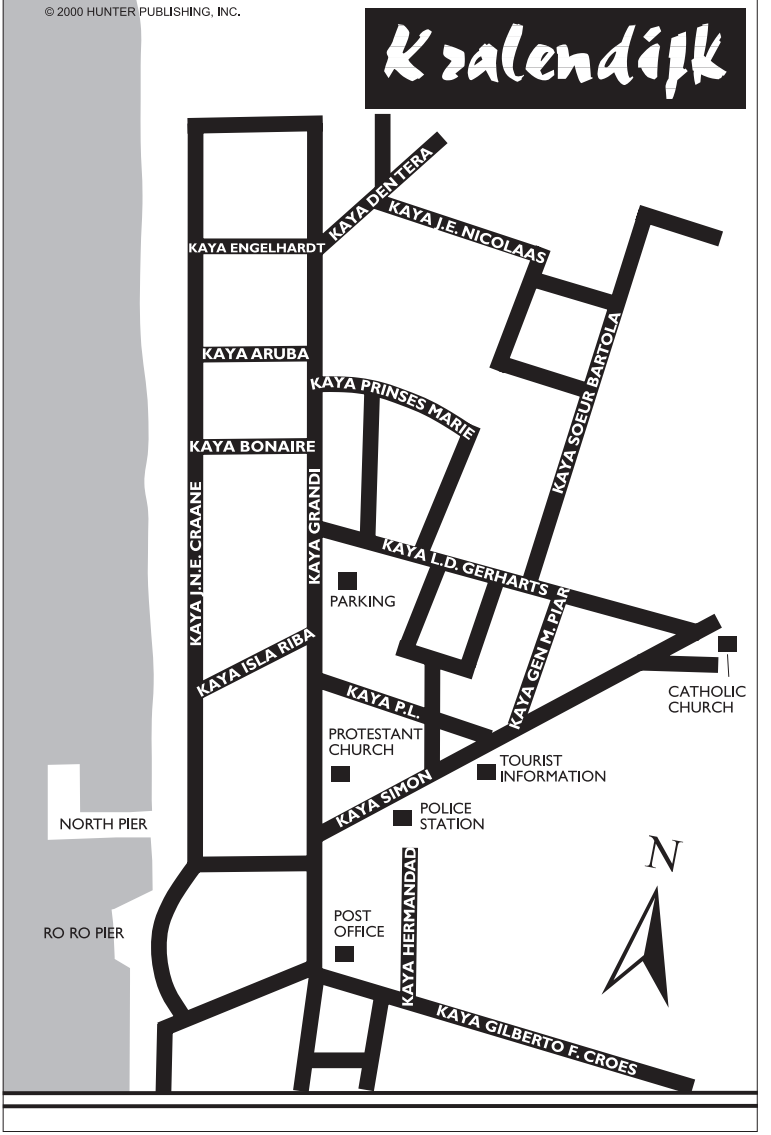


a group of divi-divi trees at the entrance to a private farm.

While sitting in the shade of a mesquite tree at **Playa Funchi** you may be joined by a whiptail lizard. Found only on Bonaire, these lizards are used to visitors and will even eat from your hand or boldly crawl across your feet. Males, with their blue head and greenish-blue hind feet and tail root, are easily distinguished from the more sedately colored females and young whiptails.

Playa Funchi served as the harbor to the Washington Plantation. The two rows of stones jutting out into the water were part of the foundation of the original pier. Since there is no current within the bay, this is a great spot for beginning snorkelers and young children. The water is so clear that those who choose not to venture in can see coral and parrot fish from the cliff overlooking the bay.

The mesquite trees are joined by the brasilwood, easily recognized from its deeply grooved trunk. It played such an important role in the island's history that on the oldest map of the Caribbean, the "Ptolemaic," dating back to 1513, Bonaire is identified as the "Ysla do Brassil" – Island of the Brasilwood Tree. It is also known as the dyewood tree, and the Indians first used the bark, leaves and berries for fishing. They would throw them in the water to drug the fish, which would then float to the surface, making them an easy catch.

Additionally, a red dye used to stain fabrics was extracted from the bark of the brasilwood tree by rasping it. Since this was often done by the prisoners in the Amsterdam jail, it earned the name "rasphuis" or rasping house. Many believe that it was the bright yellow flowers of the brasilwood tree that first attracted the Dutch to Bonaire in 1636.

*Iguana meat is considered a delicacy among the Antillean people, who believe it to be especially good for virility. Although protected by law, iguanas often fall victim to poachers.*

After leaving Playa Funchi, follow the sign that reads "Slagbaai." You'll pass through the fence that separates Washington from Slagbaai and then drive along the coast. It's not unusual to see iguanas as large as three or four feet sunning themselves on the cliffs along this route. They are completely harmless, but if you try to get too close they'll fast disappear over the cliff and may even jump into the sea. Iguanas are excellent swimmers and are able to stay underwater for extended periods of time.

You may also run into a donkey or two. Watch your speed and keep your eyes open. These donkeys have been running wild since 1925, when their exportation to Barbados and Trinidad was discontinued. You'll pass several small, secluded beaches before the road turns inland again at **Pos Nobo** (New Well), another good birdwatching stop, and **Saliña Wayacá** at the foot of Subi Brandaris (Brandaris Hill).

Continuing onwards, you'll travel down a steep decline to what was once one of Bonaire's most important harbors, **Boca Slagbaai**, Slaughter Bay. Nowadays it is a

popular dive and snorkel site. If you're travelling with young children, this is an especially fine spot for a break. There is a sandy beach and very little coral on the northern side of the bay.

Its history dates back to 1868, when the land was sold to private plantation owners. The cattle and goats that grazed on the northwestern portion of the island were slaughtered and processed here before being exported to Curaçao – hence the grisly name. Also introduced during this period was the salt industry, which had been operating in the south since 1635. The largest of the yellow colonial-style buildings was the warehouse or *magasina* where the salt was stored, while the northernmost building was the Customs Office. They date to 1868 and have been restored by STINAPA to house the park's administrative offices.

Growing alongside the warehouse are calabash trees. Their large fruit serves a multitude of purposes. When it is unripe and green in color, it is an unbeatable flea shampoo. When fully ripe, it produces a soothing syrup for sore throats. When allowed to dry to a hard shell, the fruit is carefully opened, its insides removed and replaced with the seeds of the flamboyant tree, to make a *maracá*, a popular instrument.

Reddish egrets are occasionally sighted in **Saliña Slagbaai**, located just across from the bay. Its name is misleading since the reddish egret is just as white as its cousin the

snowy egret, but it is easily distinguished by its stiff mannerisms and black-tipped, flesh-colored bill. You are almost certain to see flamingos here since the saltpans are another of their favorite feeding grounds. For a closer look, quietly follow the Green Route along the eastern edge of the saltpan.

Just beyond Boca Slagbaai you'll drive through what was once an aloe plantation, even passing the remains of an aloe oven on the right side. The difference in vegetation between the Washington side of the park (the northern section) and where you are now should be readily apparent. While the soil in Washington is lime-based, the soil in this area, the Slagbaai section, is relatively fertile. Also the hills in the north and northeast shelter Slagbaai from the constant tradewinds. Those winds give a beating to all but the most wind-resistant trees in Washington.

Protection from the tradewinds, combined with more fertile soil, has given rise to a greater variety of plant life in Slagbaai. Formerly, the goats wreaked havoc here. They nibbled away at virtually everything that grew, hastening the erosion of the topsoil by destroying the plants that held it in place. By erecting fences to limit the number of goats in Slagbaai, the park service hopes to slow the erosion process and keep the plant life and soil relatively intact.

The Green and Yellow Routes branch off again at **Ceru Sumpiña.** If you are out of

*There is a fine view of Slagbaai with Brandaris Hill deep in the background from the top of Ceru Sumpiña.*

time, continue along the Green Route, which will take you directly to the park exit. Otherwise, continue along the Yellow Route, also known as Brasil Panorama Road because of the wonderful views in the Brasil section of the park. This drive is described in the Northern Tour. Highlights include the flamingos at Saliña Frans and the panoramic views of Lake Goto and Subi Brandaris from Gotomeer.

### Detour Up Brandaris Hill (Subi Brandaris)

At 784 feet above sea level, Brandaris Hill is the highest point on Bonaire. The hike to the top and down again should take you around three hours. Combine that with the Caribbean sun and you've got a workout! Needless to say, sturdy footwear is a must, and be sure to bring plenty of water and a hat. Extra sunscreen is not a bad idea either.

Follow the Green Route to the turn-off to Subi Brandaris, a heavily wooded road that you follow to the end. There you park your vehicle. You're on foot from here. Along the way you will pass through a gate that separates Washington from Slagbaai. Be sure to shut it behind you since the fence was built to prevent Washington goats from entering Slagbaai. Remember that goats eat young shoots and so are responsible for much of the soil erosion in Washington. The footpath continues to the rocks at the base of the ridge. Then follow the yellow circles marked on the boulders along the ridge of the hill. Enroute

you'll enjoy wonderful views of Boca and Saliña Slagbaai, Goto Lake, Playa Funchi and the north coast. Reaching the top, you'll be greeted by a spectacular panorama of the island.

### Birdwatching At Put Bronswinkel

Just before the turnoff to Brandaris Hill is the entrance to Put Bronswinkel, another fresh water hole that is popular with a variety of birds, ranging from the most common to the very rare. Some of the less common varieties known to frequent this area include the black-whiskered vireo, the pearly eyed thrasher and the yellow oriole. You may need to be patient and spend some time here. As any experienced birder can tell you, your patience may be rewarded. In order not to scare the birds, it is best to park your car at the entrance and walk the short distance to the Put.

As is always true where there is a pool of stagnant water, **mosquito repellent is a must**! The months of October through February bring small fruit flies that can be extremely annoying as they tend to fly into eyes, nose and mouth.

## Shopping

Though serious shoppers will fare better in Curaçao or even Aruba, that doesn't mean you have to leave Bonaire empty-handed. You'll still be able to find gifts for the folks back home (or for yourself), including china, crystal and French perfumes at great

duty-free prices. And since Kralendijk is so small, you should be able to finish your shopping in time for a sunset happy hour or afternoon dive!

Shops in Kralendijk are open from 8 am to 12 noon and 2 pm to 6 pm, Monday through Saturdays. Most are on Kaya Grandi or in the Harbourside Mall on Kaya Crane. U.S. dollars and Antillean guilders or florins are accepted everywhere, as are major credit cards.

**FUNDASHON ARTE BONAIREANO**
*Kaya Hellmund*
This non-profit foundation is dedicated to preserving Bonaire's traditions by teaching young people popular handicrafts. Its downtown shop offers a lovely selection of locally made items, as well as some fine pieces by local artists.

**LITTLE HOLLAND**
*Harbourside Mall*
You don't have to travel to Europe to find lovely Blue Delft porcelain or table linens from Holland. Little Holland also has a great selection of Cuban cigars kept fresh in a custom-made acclimatized Cedar Cigar Room. Little Holland is part of a chain of shops found throughout the Netherlands Antilles.

**LITTMAN JEWELERS**
*Kaya Grandi 33*
For well over a decade the Littman Family has been selling its own handcrafted designs, along with high quality Swiss watches, 18 kt. Italian gold jewelry, and Swarovski crystal. This shop is located in a traditional

Bonairean house. The Littmans have opened a second shop, **Littman Gifts**, in the Harbourside Mall, where you can pick up handpainted t-shirts, costume jewelry and other moderately priced gift ideas.

**SPARKY'S**
*Harbourside Mall*
Sparky's offers a fine selection of perfumes and cosmetics at duty-free prices. Sister shops are found throughout the Caribbean.

**ZULAY'S PLACE**
*Kaya L.D. Gerharts*
Zulay's features one-of-a-kind gifts, including paintings and prints, as well as handmade jewelry from Bonaire and the Caribbean, along with unique t-shirts.

**THE BONAIRE SOUVENIR SHOP**
*Bonaire Shopping Gallery, Kaya Grandi*
Far from run-of-the-mill, the Bonaire Souvenir shop specializes in specialty postcards, posters, maps, books and unusual gift items.

**BONAIRE GIFT SHOP**
*Kaya Grandi 13*
In addition to more standard souvenirs, including t-shirts, postcards, and knick-knacks, the Bonaire gift shop features handicrafts from India, Holland and South America. Its sister shop, **Best Buddies**, at Kaya Grandi 32, features funky resortwear, including Indonesian batiks.

You can do some **last minute shopping** at the airport. Pick up postcards, t-shirts and assorted gifts at **Valerie's**. **The Duty Free**

Shop offers the usual liquors and perfumes, as well as cheeses from Holland and fine chocolates.

## After Dark

"After Dark" is something of a misnomer since Bonaire's biggest post-daytime attraction is that magic moment when the sun meets the horizon, creating the legendary "green flash." **Sunset Happy Hour**, between 5 pm and 7 pm, is an institution on Bonaire. Virtually every bar on the leeward coast has one. One of the most popular is at **Karel's Beach Bar** on the waterfront at Kaya Craane 12 in Kralendijk, where a lively crowd of locals and visitors starts to gather at around 4 pm and stays into the wee hours. Live music often accompanies the sunset at **Rum Runners** at Captain Don's Habitat, while tropical drinks are featured at the **Green Parrot** in the Sand Dollar Condominium and Beach Club.

The most memorable way to experience Bonaire's magnificent sunset is under the red sails of the *Samur*, the only authentic Siamese junk in the Caribbean. The *Samur*'s two-hour **Green Flash Sail** departs daily at 5 pm from November through February and at 5:30 pm from March to October. On Thursday evenings, sunset is followed by a seven-course **Thai Feast**. The *Samur* also offers **Full-Moon Sails** (during the full moon only), with plenty of champagne to toast the Southern Cross. Both cruises include open bar. Reservations should be made in advance

and a deposit may be required ( 5592 or 09-607307).

Once the sun sets, Bonaire quiets down considerably. If an outrageous nightlife is one of your prerequisites, then Bonaire probably won't be the island for you. However, this does not mean that you will be spending every night playing cards in your hotel room or going to bed at 9 pm. It does mean that it shouldn't be difficult for you to be on the 9 am dive boat.

To get ready for the next day's dive, you may want to attend one of the underwater slide shows offered at hotels across the island.

Sunday nights, you have a choice of **Bonaire Above & Below Water** from 8:45 to 9:30 pm at Captain Don's Habitat ( 8290) or **Reflections of Bari Reef** at the Sand Dollar Beach Club ( 8737) from 8 to 8:30 pm. On Tuesday evenings, the Sand Dollar offers the second part of Sunday's show with **Bari Reef – A Closer Look** at 8:45 pm. Then on Wednesdays, the Coral Regency Resort ( 5580) features **Bonaire Above** & Below Water at 9 pm. For an even closer look at Bonaire's marine life, join Dee Scarr for **Touch the Sea** Monday nights at 8:45 pm at Captain Don's Habitat. Movie buffs should find out whether there's anything playing in the small theater downtown.

*Call ahead to make sure there hasn't been a schedule change.*

Many of the hotel restaurants feature theme nights with live music. **Rum Runners** ( 8290) at Captain Don's Habitat offers a BBQ

night with live music on Sunday evenings from 7 pm to 10 pm; a Bonairean night featuring island cuisine and a folkloric show on Tuesday evenings at 8 pm; and a Tex-Mex Night with Captain Don on Thursdays starting at Happy Hour, with live music provided by the Kunuku Band. Friday night's Reggae Jerk Boogie Festival at the **Oceanfront Restaurant** ( 5644), with Jamaican jerk cooking and live reggae, is a lot of fun.

Choices are limited for casino and disco goers. There is a small "barefoot casino" at **Divi Flamingo Beach Resort**. A larger casino should be open by the time of your arrival at the **Plaza Resort**. Bonaire's hottest night spot is the **Fantasy Disco** upstairs at the Stephany Shopping Mall on Kaya L.D. Gerharts. It features a large dance floor with ample seating areas in a tropical ambience (and a powerful a/c). Latin and island rhythms are most popular, especially merengue and tumba, with some North American music added for good measure. Try to come on a Friday when "Magic Sound," one of the most popular bands on the island, performs. The Fantasy attracts a mature crowd, primarily locals and Dutch. The **E Wowo 2,000 Disco**, the island's first disco, attracts a younger, local crowd.

*Wednesday is Ladies Night, with free admission for women. Otherwise, there is a cover charge.*

## Bonaire A-Z

**AIRLINES:** For reservations on **Air Aruba** 8300 ext. 222; 7880 or 7890 for confirmations. Both **ALM** and **KLM** can be reached at 8300 ext. 220 or 221; 8500 on Sundays and weekdays after 5:30 pm. The local num-

ber for **Servivensa** is 8361. Be sure to confirm your flight at least 24 hours in advance. The general number for the **Flamingo Airport** is 5600.

**BANKING:** Banks are open Monday through Friday from 8 am to 4 pm. U.S. dollars are accepted virtually everywhere on the island. The ATM machine at the **A.B.N. Bank** in Kralendijk at Kaya Grandi 2 dispenses U.S. dollars, as well as Antillean guilders.

**BABYSITTING:** Most hotels will arrange for a babysitter, often a member of the staff, if you request one. The Sand Dollar Condominium and Beach Club and the Divi Flamingo have children's programs.

**CREDIT CARDS**:American Express and Visa/MasterCard are the most widely accepted. The American Express representative is **Maduro Travel**, Kaya Grandi 52 ( 8653). Services include personal and traveler's check cashing and the report of lost or stolen cards. Office hours are Monday through Friday, 8 am-12 noon and 1 to 5 pm; closed weekends and holidays.

**MADURO & CURIELS BANK**, with branches at Kaya L.D. Gerharts 1 ( 5520; fax 5520) and the airport, is the island representative for Visa/MasterCard. Services include the report of lost or stolen credit cards and cash advances. Hours: Monday, Wednesday and Thursday, 8:30 am-3:30 pm; Tuesday and Friday, 8:30 am-12 noon and 1 pm to 6 pm; Saturdays from 10 am to 3 pm.

**DEPARTURE TAX:** If you are flying to Curaçao or any of the other islands of the Netherlands Antilles you must pay a departure tax of $5.75 U.S. or NAFL 10. The departure tax for international flights, including Aruba, is $10 U.S. or NAFL 17.50.

**DRINKING WATER:** Tap water on Bonaire is purified, desalinated sea water and is safe to drink.

**ELECTRICITY:** Bonaire operates on 127/120 VAC (50 cycles), and is compatible with appliances designed for use in the United States. Adaptors may be needed in some cases.

**EMERGENCIES:** To call an ambulance, the police or the fire department, 11. To contact the hospital, 14.

**POSTAGE:** Sending a postcard to the folks back at home, whether they're in the United States, the Netherlands or Canada, will cost you NAFL 1.75 or $1 U.S.

**SHOPPING HOURS:** Stores are open from 8 am to noon and 2 pm to 6 pm, Monday through Saturday. Certain stores will open on Sundays and holidays, except Christmas and Good Friday, when cruise ships are in port. For more information, 8322 or 8649.

**TAXIS:** To call the taxi stand at the airport 8100. Otherwise, 5330.

**TELEPHONE:** Bonaire's country code and area code is **599-7**. For AT&T U.S.A Direct Service, dial 001-800-872-2881. Bonaire's only public phone is at the entrance to the Washington-Slagbaai National Park. AT&T phone booths are located in the lobby of the Sunset Hotel and at the airport.

**TELEVISION & RADIO**: CNN and other cable channels from the U.S. are available at some hotels. For the news in English, listen to Transworld Radio at 800 AM. You can get the news in Dutch on Voz di Bonaire, 94.7 FM every hour on the hour from 7 am to 6 pm.

**TOURIST OFFICE**: The tourist office is at Kaya Libertador Simon Bolivar 12 in Kralendijk ( 8322). To reach the North American office, 1-800-826-6247 (in New York 212/956-5911); or write Tourism Corporation Bonaire, 10 Rockefeller Plaza, Suite 900, New York, NY 10020. To contact the European office in the Netherlands, 31-70-395-4444; or write Tourism Corporation Bonaire, Visseringlaan 24, 2288ER Rijswijk, The Netherlands.

# Curaçao

If the ABC Islands were a song, Curaçao would write the lyrics and compose the score. If they were a celebration, Curaçao would plan the party. And, if the ABC Islands were a feast, Curaçao would cater it. For much of what defines the islands and sets them apart from others in the Caribbean grew up on Curaçao, birthplace of the local language, Papiamentu, popular music and dance, and the biggest festival in the Netherlands Antilles – Carnival. Founded on commerce by the Dutch West India Company in the 17th century, Curaçao remains a major stop on the trade routes between the Americas and Europe.

Nowhere is the Dutch influence in the Antilles stronger than on Curaçao. The island's colonial past is preserved in the delightful architecture of downtown Willemstad and in country estates dating back to the 17th and 18th centuries. Pristine reefs promise spectacular diving while the more than 40 beaches gracing the shore are set against an unspoiled landscape of rolling hills and panoramic vistas. And, though Curaçao's colonial roots run deep, it has kept pace with the rest of the world to offer visitors modern pleasures.

## History Of The Island

According to archaeological studies, Curaçao was among the earliest islands, if not the

first, in the Caribbean to be inhabited. Human remains dating as far back as 2450 B.C., the oldest in the Caribbean, have been discovered here. The island's earliest known inhabitants were the peace-loving Arawak Indians, who also lived on Aruba and Bonaire. The Arawaks were not warriors but fishermen, who traveled by dugout canoe to trade with their fellow tribes on neighboring islands. They documented much of their lifestyle with cave drawings in the northwest corner of Curaçao.

*Visit the caves in Christoffel Park*

## The Colonial Period

The first "modern man" known to have set eyes on Curaçao was Alonso de Ojeda, a lieutenant in the fleet of Christopher Columbus, who discovered Curaçao in 1499. Amazed by the size of the Indians living on all three ABC Islands, he nicknamed them the "Islas de los Gigantes," the Islands of Giants. Unfortunately, no gold or minerals were discovered on Curaçao, and the dry climate and lack of fresh water made it unsuitable for agriculture. Failing to recognize Curaçao's strategic value in the ongoing wars for control of the Caribbean, the Spanish included Curaçao among their list of *islas inutiles* (worthless islands). A little over a century later, however, the French, English and Dutch would recognize Curaçao's great value as a strategic port, thus beginning a series of skirmishes that would last until the 19th century.

In 1505 Curaçao was invaded by *indieros,* who made their living selling Indians as slaves. Approximately 2,000 of the island's able-bodied residents were shipped to His-

paniola to serve as slave laborers in the silver mines of Haiti. In fact, Curaçao would become an important slave depot, with thousands of transactions a year until the beginning of the 18th century. At times there would be up to 14,000 slaves on the island at one time awaiting transport to the New Netherlands and the Spanish coast. The slave trade peaked in 1713.

Shortly after the Spanish government appointed him a factor of Curaçao in 1526, Juan de Ampués returned to the island with 200 slaves, along with sheep, goats, cows and horses from Europe. Throughout the next century he would oversee the operation of the island as a self-sufficient ranch supplying horses, hides and dye-wood. Marauding pirates were wreaking havoc throughout much of the Caribbean during this time, while English, French and Dutch forces fought for control, either among themselves or by joining together to wrest control from the Spanish.

This situation would continue until July 29, 1634, when Johann Van Walbeek and a fleet of six ships with 225 soldiers arrived in Santa Anna Bay to claim Curaçao for the Dutch West India Company. Just prior to the attack, Jan Jansz Otzen, a dark-skinned Dutchman, had tipped off the West India Company that the island would be an easy target since it was only inhabited by a small group of Spaniards. Limited possibilities to land on the island would make it easy to defend against future attacks. Curaçao would also benefit the Company in several ways. Its natural harbor would be useful in the Company's ongoing battles against the Spanish. It would

also provide another stronghold in the Caribbean from which to police its trading routes and possessions in the New Netherlands and Brazil. In addition, the Company believed that Curaçao could become an important agricultural colony.

*Today Fort Amsterdam is the seat of the government of the Netherlands Antilles.*

The Spaniards surrendered Curaçao to the Dutch in exchange for safe passage to Europe for 32 Spaniards, including children and 402 Indians. After their victory, the Dutch quickly set to work fortifying the entrance to the harbor, building Fort Amsterdam on the outcrop of land alongside the Santa Anna Bay.

Though best known as the one-legged governor of New Amsterdam, later to become New York, Peter Stuyvesant was one of Curaçao's earliest directors. He was appointed governor in 1642 and was then named governor of the New Netherlands in 1646. Stuveysant would be based in New Amsterdam throughout his term as governor, which would last until 1664. His most noteworthy achievement was the establishment of a slave depot on Curaçao where, following their capture, the slaves would rest and regain their strength before being sold and transported to their final destination. Until early in the 18th century, Curaçao's slave depot was the most important in the Caribbean, with about 40% of the slaves shipped via the Atlantic passing through Curaçao.

But Curaçao's maritime value went beyond serving as a slave depot. The island was also an important depot for South American and Caribbean products bound for Europe. In

fact, French and English merchants were dependant on the trading expertise of the Dutch. Perhaps to an even greater extent, much of the island's commercial success was due to the Sephardic Jews who had fled to Curaçao after the fall of Brazil in 1654. This group would quickly dominate the business community through their knowledge of local trading practices, trade routes and the Spanish language. Eventually Curaçaoan society would be dominated by three ethnic groups: Western Europeans, the majority of whom were involved in government; Sephardic Jews who were primarily merchants; and black laborers, although their numbers would be low since agriculture never flourished here because of the dry climate.

While Jan Otzen's vision of agricultural development would never come to fruition, his assessment of the harbor's importance was right on target. But he did err in his assessment of the island's defenses. Rather than attack the main harbor, Santa Anna Bay, the English and French would invade via the unprotected bays. Throughout the 18th century Curaçao's economy would rise and fall with the whim of the warring Europeans. In 1713 the French pirate Cassard invaded the island, then pulled out in exchange for 115,000 pesos in money, goods and slaves. During the Seven Years War, which lasted from 1757 to 1763, several West India vessels were seized by the English. Trade was resuscitated during the American War of Independence when Curaçao served as an important station on the supply route from Europe to America. It was also during this period that several Spanish colonies began trading with Europe. As

many as 100 vessels would leave the Santa Anna Bay in a single day.

With the French occupation of the Netherlands in the later years of the 18th century, the exiled Prince of Orange wrote to the colonies advising them to seek the protection of the British. French forces, in an effort to prevent British interference, promptly attacked Curaçao. But, the British intervened and would control the island from 1800 to 1803.

Ironically, the British were driven out of Curaçao in 1804 by the Curaçaoan militia led by Piar and Briar, who would later become heroes in the Venezuelan Wars for Independence from Spain. The British would regain control on January 1, 1807 by launching a surprise attack on Santa Anna Bay, taking advantage of the New Year's holiday to catch Fort Amsterdam unprepared. The British remained in control of the island until 1816, when the Dutch took over under the terms of the Treaty of Paris, signed in 1815.

## The Slave Revolt

Although it was not an agricultural colony, Curaçao did boast several large plantations. The most noteworthy were Knip and Savoneta on the western tip of the island. Maize, sugar (though not to the extent of other islands), peanuts, melons, and other fruit were cultivated, with as many as 50 slaves working in the fields. Goats and sheep were the primary livestock. While the plantation owners lived comfortably in lavish landhouses, the slaves lived in huts built partly with the remnants of maize stalks.

Free slaves lived in the savannah area between plantations eking out a meager living fishing and doing manual work.
During good times, the plantations could produce enough food to be self-sufficient. However, those times were few and far between, given the island's arid climate, leaving island residents dependent on foods imported from Holland and the rest of Europe. Pirate blockades frequently prevented those imports from reaching Curaçao. One such blockade was a contributing factor to the slave revolt of 1765.

During this period, the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity espoused during the French Revolution were echoing throughout the Caribbean. In 1794 the French General Rigaud helped the slaves of Haiti to free themselves. On August 17, 1795, the slaves of Knip Plantation rebelled. The revolt spread throughout Banda Bou, the western side of Curaçao. At Porto Marie 1,000 slaves overcame the auxiliary forces that had been sent in to quash the revolt. But on August 26, the commander of the auxiliary forces seized control of the slaves' storehouses at Christoffel. The slave leaders Tula and Carpata were executed. The other slaves returned to work. Slavery would not be formally abolished on Curaçao until 1863.

The emancipation of the slaves by King William III of the Netherlands was the biggest event of the 19th century. Sixty-seven government slaves and 6,684 private slaves gained their freedom, although their social standing remained low. In order to ensure the continued operation of the island's plantations, the *paga-tera* system was introduced.

Under that system, former slaves could continue to work on the plantation; in exchange they were given a small piece of land for their own use as well as goods or a small salary.

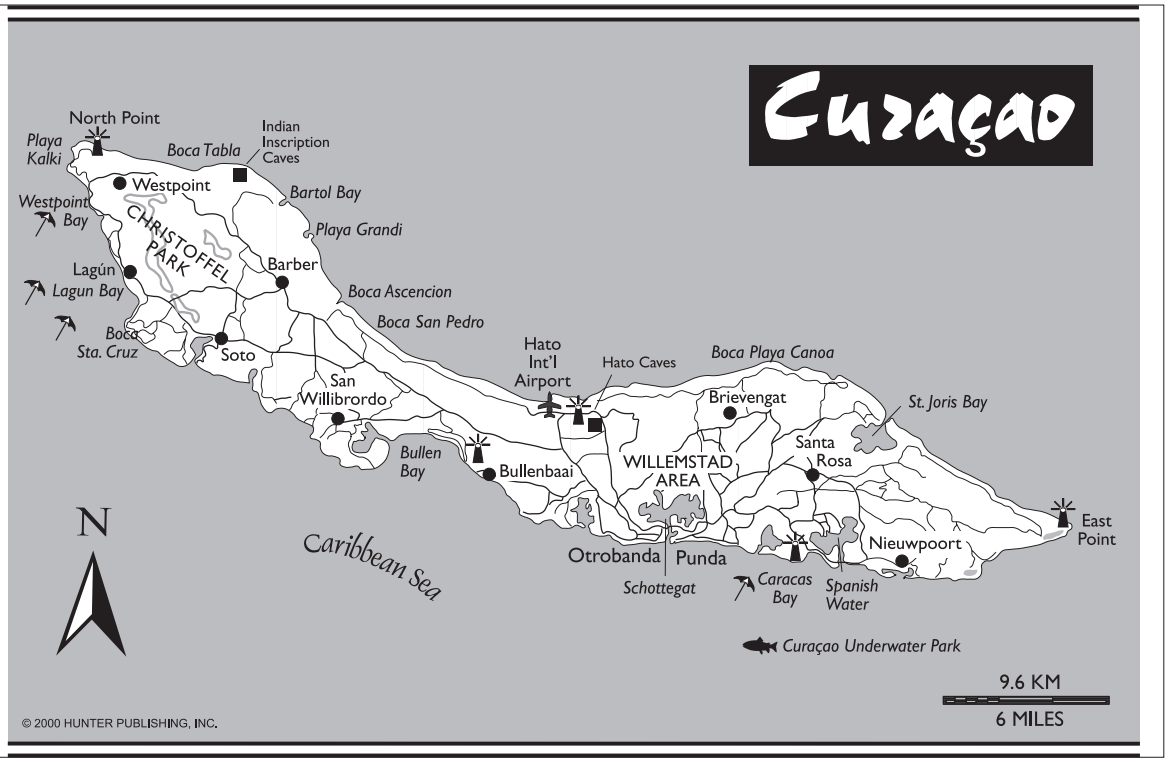
Eventually, the little agriculture that there was on Curaçao, coupled with the production of Panama hats, was not enough to support the descendants of the freed slaves. Between the years of 1917 and 1920, nearly 2,500 men would leave for Cuba to work in the sugarcane fields.

## Modern Day Curaçao

Following the emancipation of the slaves in 1863, Curaçao's economy went into a fairly steady decline, forcing many laborers to seek employment on neighboring islands. This situation persisted until 1915 when the Royal Dutch Shell Group established a refinery on Curaçao. The refinery officially opened its doors on May 23, 1918. Although financially independent from Holland, the island's economy was now dependant on the Shell refinery. Shell became the largest employer. Many local industries disappeared as workers abandoned traditional jobs for the higher wages offered by the refinery. There was also a mass immigration of workers to Curaçao.

*At that time the islands of the Netherlands Antilles were Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao, St. Maarten, St. Eustatius and Saba. Aruba seceded in 1986.*

During World War II Curaçao served as a refueling station for allied jet fighters, making it a target for the enemy. Hence, the island was in a state of perpetual readiness against a German U-boat attack. Following the War, the oil business boomed, with nearly 18,500 residents employed by the refinery in 1952. In 1954 the Netherlands Antilles became an au-



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tonomous part of the Netherlands, and Curaçao was designated the seat of its government.

Curaçao prospered throughout the 1950's and 1960's. It became a popular tax haven for wealthy Americans. Wealthy Venezuelans frequented the shops of Willemstad, which were well-stocked with European merchandise. Unfortunately, Curaçao's economy was not to remain strong forever. The island came upon tough times during the 1980's. Following the devaluation of the bolívar in 1983, Venezuelans could no longer afford to shop in Willemstad. In 1984 a change in U.S. tax laws made it possible for Americans to conduct business directly with the Eurodollar capital market, and they stopped investing in Curaçao. A declining oil market forced Shell to close the refinery in 1985.

## Curacao In The Nineties

Curaçao is working hard to make a comeback in the 1990's. The government has taken over the oil refinery and is now leasing it to a Venezuelan company, PDVSA. Not only does this create revenue for the government, but it has also become a source of new jobs for island residents.

The island is quickly regaining its colonial status as a major commercial center. Not only is Willemstad's Shottegatt Harbor the largest harbor in the Caribbean and the fourth largest port in the world, it is the biggest drydock in the Western Hemisphere and home to one of the world's major bunkering ports. Fifty cargo lines travel through Curaçao. On average, over 20 vessels a day come into port. It

has become a major and indispensable port of call between the Americas, and is fast becoming a stopping point for trade between the United States, Europe, the Caribbean and Latin America.
Goods which pass through Curaçao have easy access to both the United States and European markets. Due to its political links with Holland, Curaçao is an Associate Member of the European Economic Community. As a participant in the Caribbean Basin Initiative, Curaçao receives preferential treatment from the United States.

The Curaçaoan government is also implementing incentive programs to promote private investment, one of which is the Free Trade Zone. Merchandise warehoused or processed with its final destination in the Free Zone is not taxed at the same rate as merchandise produced outside the country. Businesses that operate from within the Free Zone enjoy a 2% tax rate. This rate applies to as much as 25% of revenues generated by goods not produced or imported for domestic consumption. There are a growing number of industries on the island, including the Amstel Brewery, cigarette manufacturers, a paint factory, a battery factory and two soap factories. Curaçao is also home to the largest desalination plant in the world, producing 1.6 billion gallons of drinking water a year.

Yet Curaçao is not all business. Islanders are working hard to rejuvenate the tourism industry. New hotels are opening up, including the Lion's Dive and the Sonesta, and older ones are being refurbished. Since many of Curaçao's loveliest beaches and finest dive

sites are on the western part of the island, far from the commercial center, it's easy to mix business with pleasure without having one interfere with the other. A recent tourist brochure aptly described Curaçao as "an island of business in a sea of pleasure."

## The Government

As part of the Netherlands Antilles, which is administered by a parliamentary democracy, Curaçao's external affairs fall under the jurisdiction of its governing bodies based in Willemstad. The island's internal affairs are administered by the popularly elected Island Council, which carries out both executive and legislative functions. Curaçao's Lieutenant Governor serves as the Crown's representative in Curaçao and is appointed by the Queen of the Netherlands.

## The People

Curaçao's population is remarkably diverse. Periods of growth in the Curaçaoan economy attracted laborers not only from the neighboring islands, but from other countries and Dutch colonies all around the world. Some 50 different nationalities are represented in Curaçao, which has a population of 145,000. Over 16% of island residents were born outside the Netherlands Antilles. It is also an island of great religious and racial tolerance. Catholics, Protestants, Jews and Muslims are all free to worship on the island.

## The Jews Of Curaçao

The oldest in the Americas, Curaçao's Jewish Congregation can trace its roots to the year 1492, when the Spanish Inquisition ordered the expulsion from Spain of all Jews who refused to be baptized by the Catholic Church. Most fled to nearby Portugal, where the long arm of the Inquisition was still able to reach them. While many headed to the Mediterranean, several stayed behind. Known as *conversos* (secret Jews), they would remain in hiding in Portugal for over a century before eventually finding refuge in Amsterdam under the tolerant reign of the Princes of Orange-Nassau.

Amsterdam's newly arrived Sephardic community prospered. In 1651, appointed by the Dutch West India Company to establish a Jewish agricultural settlement, Joao d'Ilhan, accompanied by 10 Jewish families, travelled to Curaçao and established the New World's first Jewish congregation. They called it Mikvé Israel, The Hope of Israel. In 1659 they were joined by 70 families from Amsterdam. Many were Jewish settlers from Dutch Brazil (Recife), who had returned to Europe after the Portuguese conquered Brazil. Immigration to Curaçao continued and by 1732 the Jewish Congregation had over 2,000 members.

In 1659, on what was originally agricultural property and is now the oil refinery, the settlers consecrated a cemetery, Beth Hayim, House of the Living. Today it is the oldest Jewish burial ground in the Americas. Some believe that a synagogue was also built there,

which had to be replaced by a larger one in 1681.

It soon became apparent that neither Curaçao's soil nor its climate were suited to agriculture. Fortunately the settlers recognized that the island's location and harbor were ideal for shipping and ship-building and quickly set out to develop those industries. Between the years 1670 and 1900, Jews owned over 1,200 ships. One shipping firm, owned by the Jesurun family, had over 100 ships sailing between the Caribbean islands, New York and Europe. Over 200 ship captains were Jews. Through their efforts, Curaçao became a major hub for trade among Europe, the Americas, and other island colonies, English and Spanish, in the Caribbean.

*Jews formed a large part of the island's infrastruc-*

The Jews also played a major role in the development of related businesses, such as bunkering, off-shore banking and finance and the import/export trade. Prosperity followed and they went on to build many of the buildings in Punda, all of Scharloo, the mansions of Piertermaii and many Landhuisen in the countryside. Their children and grandchildren became doctors, lawyers, civil servants and publishers.

*For a description of the Synagogue, see below, under* The Museums of Curacao.

As they made the transition from agriculture to commerce, Curaçao's Jewish families began leaving their plantations and moving to Willemstad. The first city synagogue was built shortly thereafter. But, due to the rapid growth of the community, it soon proved too small and was torn down. A new one was built in its place in 1703, only to be torn down

again. The final synagogue was built and consecrated in 1732 on the eve of Passover. It has been in constant use ever since, making it the oldest synagogue in the Western Hemisphere.

Yet, it was not to remain the only synagogue on the island. In 1740 a second synagogue was consecrated on Breedestraat in Otrobanda. The Otrobanda Jews had been complaining that rowing across the harbor to attend services on Shabbat violated the commandments. The new synagogue, a branch of Mikvé Israel called Neve Shalom, Peaceable Habitation, was built to appease them. But the new congregation, resenting the control exerted over it by the Parnassim of Mikvé Israel, wanted to secede. Relations between the two congregations deteriorated to such a degree that the economic and public life of the island was affected. The situation became so bad that in 1750 Prince Willem of Orange Nassau in Holland issued a royal decree to end the dispute. Both congregations observed the decree. Eventually, the decline of Otrobanda's Jewish population forced Neve Shalom to close its doors in 1818.

Later, another schism in the Mikvé Israel congregation would have more enduring results. By 1864 the Reform Jewish Movement, which had been gaining support in the United States and Germany, had developed a following of around 100 families on Curaçao. They broke from the Congregation Mikvé Israel to establish their own congregation. The Reform Congregation consecrated its own temple, Emanuel, on Hendrikplein in 1867. Though tense at first, relations between the two con-

gregations gradually became friendly. They merged in 1964 to form Curaçao's present congregation: the United Netherlands Portuguese Congregation of Mikvé Israel-Emanuel, which is affiliated with the Jewish Reconstructionist Foundation and the World Union for Progressive Judaism.

*The Ashkenazim are involved in the retail clothing, textile and jewelry indus-*

Today Curaçao's Jewish population is made up of both Sephardic and Ashkenazim families who began arriving in 1926. Though economic recessions have forced members of both groups to emigrate, reducing their numbers substantially, their presence is still apparent in the religious, civic and commercial life of the island.

## The Music Of Curaçao

Curaçao's music is a reflection of the island's rich multi-ethnic heritage. Her African, Caribbean, European and Antillean ancestors have all played an important part in the development of Curaçao's folkloric music.

The music most essentially Curaçaoan is the *tambu*. It originated with the African slaves who danced secretly to express their sorrow. Partners in the dance never touch. Their hips and feet sway to the rhythm while the rest of the body remains still. During the colonial period, slave owners forbade music and dancing, fearing they would lead to conspiracy and revolt. The ban was continued by the Catholic Church following the abolition of slavery in 1863. But the *tambu* eventually made its way into the drawing rooms and parties of the upper and middle classes, joining the danza, polka, mazurka and waltz.

The word *tambu* has three meanings. It describes the small drum on which the music is played; the dance performed to the accompaniment of the drum; or the social event where *tambu* is danced and played. In the modern *tambu*, the lyrics are usually in Papiamentu and are accompanied by a *chapi* or hoe, the small drum, and perhaps singers, while spectators clap to the rhythm. The *tambu* rhythm is a complicated one which, unwritten, is passed from generation to generation. It consists of two different beats – the *sla habri* or open beat and the *sla será* or closed beat – which alternate to create a musical dialogue. Great skill is required to repeat the complicated rhythms. There are also two types of *tambu*. The *telele* is a long lilting melody sung slowly, while the *tambu* itself is faster paced and shorter in duration.

Also of African origin is the *seu*, music and dance of the harvest of the *kassir* corn. To the music of the *tambu*, the *chapi*, *bastel* or cowhorn, and the *kachu* or conchshell, men and women dance together, simulating the harvesting of corn. Men cut the stalks while women carrying baskets on their heads follow. With hips swaying, they walk forward and back, rhythmically dipping to pick up the cobs as they make their way to the storage bins.

Most popular of all is *tumba*, the music of Carnival. *Tumba*'s Afro-Caribbean beat is akin to the calypso of Trinidad, the merengue of Santo Domingo and the cumbia of Colombia. There are two related schools of thought as to its origin. One asserts that *tumba* has its roots in Latin America and was adapted by

the people of the Netherlands Antilles; the other holds that it is a 20th-century version of the *tambu*.

There are seven different variations on the *tumba*, which can be broken down into two broad groups. There is ballroom *tumba*, which has a slow, uncomplicated and melodious rhythm and is relatively easy to dance to. Then there is the *tumba* of Carnival which, although not nearly as melodious as its ballroom counterpart, is characterized by complicated rhythms. These, along with the lyrics, are repeated over and over, becoming progressively faster, until they reach a frenzied pace. Dancers hold each other and then part to do variations on the basic steps. A vibrant, lively and creative dance, the *tumba* is as much fun to watch as it is to dance.

Curaçao's European colonists also played a role in the formation of the island's music. After watching their masters, the slaves eventually copied and adapted the waltz to their own rhythms. The first Curaçaoan waltzes were composed in the 19th century, and they are still danced today. The mazurka and the more complicated French quadrille were also popular.

If you're lucky enough to attend a local dance, you may discover that the music is provided, not by a DJ or live band, but by the *ka'i orgel* organ. Imported from Italy and Spain at the turn of the century, the organ works like a player piano. Originally, the cylinders only included European music. Eventually local musicians began to compose their own. Nowadays, each organ has three cylinders, gener-

ally containing three waltzes, one mazurka, one polka, one horops, one *danza* and one *tumba*.

Rather than limit yourself to the hotel shows, find out if there are any dances or festivals you can attend. Check the local papers or ask around in restaurants, your hotel, a shop in town. It's a great way to experience Curaçao's wonderful music first-hand!

## Festivals & Holidays

Curaço enjoys an active cultural life with music festivals held throughout the year, ranging from classical to salsa and jazz. Touring international theater and dance troupes, not to mention symphony orchestras, may offer a performance at the international trade center. Not to be overlooked are the cultural events held throughout the island, including the monthly festivals featuring folkloric music and dance, local foods and handicraft displays hosted by Landhouses Ascensión (first Sunday of the month) and Brievengat (last Sunday of the month). Willemstad celebrates the island's heritage and culture every month with the colorful Ban Topa Street Festival.

Sporting events are also popular. Curaçao's constant wind and placid seas are ideal for sailing, and regattas are a regular occurrence, frequently hosted by the Yacht Clubs at Spanish Water.

## Annual Events

**Tumba Festival/Carnival.** Curaçao's Carnival is one of the biggest and flashiest in the Caribbean. See below for details.

**International Blue Marlin Tournament.** This March event attracts sportsmen from Venezuela and across the Caribbean.

**Curaçao International Sailing Regatta.** Catamarans and Sunfish from Holland, the U.S., and the Caribbean compete in this week-long event hosted by the Sea Aquarium in April.

**Sami Sail Regatta.** A local favorite. Every April the fishing village of St. Michiel, just north of Piscadera Bay, hosts this one-day event.

**Curaçao Salsa Festival**. Top *salseros* from Latin America and the Caribbean perform at the Outdoor Festival Center in August.

**Curaçao Jazz Festival**. Warm weather and "cool jazz" have made this November event a favorite for at least a decade.

For more information concerning these and other events held on Curaçao, contact the Curaçao Tourist Board.

## National Holidays

Banks, the post office and government offices will be closed on these days. Many shops and restaurants may also close.

| | |
|---|---|
| New Year's Day | January 1 |
| Carnival Monday | Monday before Ash Wednesday |
| Good Friday | |
| Easter Monday | |
| Queen's Birthday | April 30 |
| Labor Day | May 1 |
| Ascension Day | May (varies) |
| Flag Day | July 2 |
| Christmas Day | December 25 |
| Boxing Day | December 26 |

## Carnival

If your dream is to be in Curaçao for Carnival, you'd better make your reservations far in advance. Carnival season is the most popular time of year to visit. Unlike the bawdy, bacchanalian free-for-all in Rio de Janeiro, Curaçao's Carnival is a family event, appropriate for children as well as adults.

It has its roots in the Dutch provinces of Brabandt and Limburg where the celebration of Carnival dates back to the Middle Ages. The Carnival tradition, as brought by the Dutch colonists, was one of small parties held in elite social clubs. The opening of the Royal Dutch Shell Oil Refinery in 1915 attracted workers from neighboring islands, who brought with them their lively carnival traditions. Carnival quickly spread to the popular classes and became an islandwide celebration until 1954. That year the government of Curaçao cancelled the Carnival celebration as a gesture of sympathy and solidarity with the suffering people of Holland. The Motherland was in the midst of one of the worst di-

sasters in history. During a violent storm the North Sea had broken through the dikes, flooding a large part of the country. Hundreds of lives were lost along with farmland and countless homes.

Despite repeated attempts over the next 18 years, the Carnival tradition was not revived until 1971, when Omalio Merien assembled the first Carnival Committee of Curaçao to organize the new Carnival. An addition to the celebration was the **Tumba Festival**. During this four-day event in the Curaçao Festival Center, hundreds of bands from across the island compete before an audience of thousands to have their *tumba* selected as the year's Carnival theme. The lead singer of the winning band will be crowned Carnival King or Queen and the winning *tumba* will be played by all the Carnival bands as they travel the route of the Grand March.

Carnival preparations begin long before the actual event. In fact, one year's Carnival will barely have ended before the groups convene to discuss the theme for the next year and to begin designing costumes and ordering fabric. The festivities get underway in January with the **Old Mask Parade**. As a final tribute to the previous year's celebration, revelers don that year's costumes and dance through the streets to the old *tumba* before focusing on the upcoming Carnival. Elections are held for the Prince and Jester, who will be awarded Keys to the City by the Lieutenant Governor, and a beauty pageant is held to select the Carnival Queen. Since children's parades are held in addition to the adult ones,

*Some residents even camp out the night before to secure a good spot.*

both children and adult Princes, Jesters, and Carnival Queens are selected. Throughout the month of January, impromptu **jump-ups**, nocturnal dancing free-for-alls, will dot the streets and the countryside as spirits start to rise.

*Yards of fabric, sequins and feathers, and months of work go into every costume.*

Once the local authorities give the okay, about a week before the first parade, residents drag chairs, benches or whatever else they can think of, out to the street, to claim their spot along the parade route. Commotion ensues, with friendly disputes as to who got where first. When things settle down, chairs are chained in place and remain undisturbed throughout the week's festivities.

The months of preparation culminate in **The Grand March**, which takes place on the Sunday before Ash Wednesday. All day long local groups in their colorfully elaborate costumes parade through the streets to the beat of that year's winning *tumba*. The merrymaking subsides a bit on Monday, only to rise to a feverish pitch on Shrove Tuesday. Following the torchlight Farewell March and the burning of the Mummer King (*El Rey Momo)*, the dancing and partying will last well into the early morning hours.

## Location & Getting There

With Bonaire 30 miles to the east and Aruba 42 miles west, Curaçao is at the center of the ABC Islands. The island is at 12° north and 69° west longitude 1,710 miles south of New York and 35 miles north of Venezuela.

## By Air

Non-stop service to Curaçao from the United States generally originates out of Miami. Flight time is two hours and 45 minutes. **American Airlines** ( 1-800/433-7300) offers daily non-stop service from Miami (11:00 am departure). Through a codeshare program between the two airlines, passengers flying **United Airlines** from other U.S. cities connect in Miami with the ALM flight to Curaçao. Reservations must be made through United ( 1-800/241-6522). **ALM** ( 1-800/327-7230) generally offers two flights daily between Miami and Curaçao (1:30 pm and 6 pm). ALM also flies to Curaçao out of Atlanta on Saturdays and Sundays at 1:30 pm. Flight time is four hours.

**Air Aruba** ( 1-800/882-7822) flies to Curaçao with a stopover in Aruba out of Newark, Miami, Baltimore, and Tampa. **Guyana Airways** flies to Curaçao out of New York's Kennedy International Airport on Thursdays and Saturdays.

**KLM** ( 1-800/374-7747) offers daily service between Holland and Curaçao.

A few days in Curaçao can easily be combined with a trip to Venezuela. **Avensa** ( 1-800/428-3672**)** offers daily service service between Caracas and Curaçao. ALM also offers several weekly flights between Curaçao and Venezuela.

### Via Cruise Ship

Willemstad is included in the itineraries of numerous cruise lines, including Crystal Cruises, Costa Cruise Lines, Norwegian Cruise Lines, and the Cunard Line. The passenger terminal is in Otrobanda alongside the Queen Emma Bridge. A Tourist Information Kiosk sponsored by the Curaçao Tourist Board is located in the terminal.

## Island Orientation

Thirty-eight miles long, with widths ranging from 7.2 to 2.5 miles at its narrow middle, Curaçao covers an area of over 174 square miles and is the largest of the ABC islands. Like its sister islands, Aruba and Bonaire, Curaçao's rugged windward coast is constantly battered by pounding waves driven in by the trade winds, while its protected leeward side is known for its lovely tranquil bays and secluded beaches.

Flights to Curaçao land at the Hato International Airport, which is located not quite mid-island on the north coast. Southeast of the airport, Curaçao's capital, Willemstad, is on the south coast, nestled between the Caribbean and the Schottegat Harbor. The city's two principal districts, Punda to the east and Otrobanda to the west, are separated by the Santa Anna Bay, which connects the Schottegat with the sea. Shopping, nightlife, most restaurants and hotels are in the area immediately in and around Willemstad.

Just southeast of Willemstad in the area known as Bapor Kibrá are the Curaçao Sea Aquarium and the Sea Aquarium Beach, two of the island's most popular attractions, along with the Lion's Dive Hotel & Marina. The Princess Beach Resort & Casino is in this area as well. Further east is Spanish Water, a beautiful sheltered bay, home of the island's most exclusive residential areas and yacht clubs. The Sonesta Resort & Casino and the Curaçao Caribbean Hotel & Casino are located 10 minutes west of Willemstad on Piscadera Baai.

While the southeast, especially in the area around Willemstad, is more developed, Curaçao's northwestern region is more scenic, home to the island's loveliest beaches and most beautiful vistas. The Coral Cliff Resort and Casino is in this area, as is the Kadushi Cliffs Resort, a cluster of luxury villas dramatically perched atop a cliff overlooking Playa Kalki, one of Curaçao's most spectacular beaches. Nearby is the 4,500-acre Christoffel National Park, habitat of the rare Curaçao white-tailed deer and home of the island's highest peak. At 1,239 feet, the Christoffelberg, or Mt. Christoffel, towers majestically above Curaçao. Those who manage the climb to the top are richly rewarded with magnificent views across the island, oftentimes reaching as far as Bonaire and Venezuela.

## Arrival/Getting To Your Hotel

Your arrival at the Curaçao International Airport should be relatively trouble-free. If

you've arrived without a hotel reservation, there should be someone at the Tourist Information Booth to assist you. If you've made arrangements for a car, you can pick it up, along with directions to get you to your hotel. Otherwise cabs are available right at the exit. Fares are calculated based on distance and are charged per cab for up to four persons. A 25% surcharge will apply for a fifth person. There is also an extra charge if luggage is so excessive that the trunk does not close. The fare to the hotels in and around Willemstad should be around $20. If you're staying at one of the more remote hotels, arrange for a hotel transfer when making reservations. Otherwise, you can expect to pay $30 to $50, depending on where you stay.

## Getting Around The Island

Beach and dive enthusiasts will definitely want to rent a car, since the best beaches and shore dives are along the southwest coast and quite distant from hotels. Jeeps are preferable, both for carrying dive gear and for travelling the dirt roads that lead to the beaches.

### Car Rentals

Since rentals are popular on Curaçao, it is best to make arrangements for a vehicle prior to your arrival. When making hotel reservations, ask if there is a car rental agency on the property. If so you may be able to arrange for a car rental at that time. To accommodate divers, most agencies offer minivans, pick-ups and jeeps.

The following agencies have branches at the airport and/or offer free pick-up and delivery. Most also have branches at several hotels:

**Avis:** Curaçao International Airport, 681163; Anthony Veder Building, 614700 or 611255.

**Budget:** Curaçao International Airport and major hotels. 683466.

**Dollar:** Curaçao International Airport, 690262. Head Office, 613144.

**Empress:** Curaçao International Airport, 691280. Salinja, 617910.

**National:** Curaçao International Airport, 683489. Branches at the Van der Valk Plaza, Lions Dive and Sonesta Hotels, and in Willemstad at Rooseveltweg 449 ( 694433/fax 690200).

In order to rent a car you must have a valid driving license which has been held for at least 24 months. The minimum age requirement varies by agency and type of vehicle, and may be anywhere from 21 to 26 years of age. Payment can be made in cash or by credit card. However, if you pay by cash you may need to leave a fairly substantial deposit. Most agencies offer unlimited mileage. Curaçao has enacted seatbelt laws, so buckle up.

Driving is on the right side of the road. Heavy traffic at peak times, one-way streets and un-

familiar traffic patterns in the areas surrounding Willemstad will require that you pay a little extra attention. Watch out for goats and donkeys; they have been known to wander into the road in the countryside and also close to Willemstad. Finally, exercise caution if you're driving during or after a rainstorm when roads will be extra slippery due to built-up dust and oil occasioned by the island's infrequent rains. Remember to lock your doors when leaving the car unattended, and don't leave any valuables, such as a camera or dive equipment, in open view or in the trunk overnight.

## Buses

What you may lose in convenience and flexibility, you'll make up in savings when you travel by bus. Most beaches and sights are accessible by public transportation, including Christoffel Park, the Sea Aquarium, Knip Baai, Lagún, and Westpunt Beach. Several different routes criss-cross the island, with departures from the terminals in Punda and Otrobanda. To give you an idea of cost, the fare from Otrobanda to Westpunt, 90 minutes by bus, is under $1.50. For beach-bound buses, the average time between departures is two hours. For information, contact ABC at 684733 or 617182.

## Taxis

Taxi stands are located at all the major hotels. The rates should be posted in the cab and are valid between 6 am and 11 pm, after which time a 25% surcharge applies. Depending on the driver, you should be able to

hire a cab for sightseeing at an hourly rate of around $25 for a minimum of one hour. Someone at your hotel may be able to help you arrange this.

If you need to call a cab, contact the central dispatch office at 690747 or 690752. The Punda branch is on the Plaza Piar ( 611187) and the Otrobanda dispatcher is on the Plaza Brion ( 623621). If you're at a restaurant or nightclub and need a cab home, someone there should be able to arrange one for you.

## Where To Stay

Accommodations on Curaçao run the gamut, from small country inns and simple in-town hotels to brand new five-star luxury resorts. You can stay right in Willemstad at a continental-style hotel or in your own luxury villa atop a cliff overlooking the Caribbean. There are plenty of in-between options available as well, some more remotely located than others. All in all, you should be pleasantly surprised by hotel prices on Curaçao when compared with Aruba and many other islands in the Caribbean.

The growing revival of tourism to Curaçao has spurred the renovation of a few of the island's older properties, though some are still in need of a facelift. If your travel agent recommends an unfamiliar hotel, be sure to ask for a brochure. Also, find out how old it is and, if appropriate, if it has been renovated.

### Alive Price Scale

Our price scale is designed to give you a ballpark figure for planning. It is based on the

price of a double room during high season, which generally runs from mid-December to mid-April, though exact dates will vary by hotel. Keep in mind that rates may be lower at other times, but the amount varies from hotel to hotel, and the difference may not be significant. Considerable savings may be had by taking advantage of special packages, such as those for honeymooners, divers and families. You may also do better by reserving with the hotel directly rather than through the main reservation office, a reservation service or travel agent.

Breakfast and meals are generally not included in the rate, though most hotels do offer separate meal plans. A 7% government tax is levied on the room rate and a 12% service charge will generally be added to the rate as well.

| | |
|---|---|
| Deluxe | $250+ |
| Expensive | $150-$250 |
| Moderate | $100-$150 |
| Inexpensive | Under $100 |

The following are our recommendations from among the different types of accommodations available. All hotels described take major credit cards unless specifically noted.

**SONESTA BEACH HOTEL & CASINO**
*Piscadera Bay*
*248 rooms, including studio & one-bedroom suites*
*599-9-368800; fax 599-9-627502*
*In U.S & Canada, 1-800-SONESTA*
*European sales & reservations office:*
*(020) 4000111; fax (020) 4000112*
*Deluxe*

*$41 million went into the construction of this luxury resort which opened in November 1992.*

If the Sonesta were your home, you would probably lock yourself in and throw away the key. As you step into the lobby and look beyond the fountains to the lush gardens surrounding the pool and then out to the azure waters of the Caribbean, you'll be swept away not only by the view but by the magnificent Dutch Caribbean setting and the friendly greetings you'll receive at the reception desk. One of the newest resorts on the island, the Sonesta will pamper you with modern luxury. Guest rooms are spacious and beautifully appointed; and the attentive staff will cater to your every whim, whether it be a massage at the health club, an exotic drink at the swim-up bar, or a special request at one of the Sonesta's world-class restaurants. Several different types of accommodations are available, with island, garden or ocean view. Honeymooners should request a terrace suite, which has a large balcony with ocean view, Roman-style jacuzzi and private sunbathing terrace.

*The workout is optional.*

You can start your day with an invigorating workout at the Health Club, which features state-of-the-art exercise equipment, along with two steamrooms and saunas, whirlpools and a massage room. Follow that with a leisurely poolside breakfast at the Palm café. As for the rest of the day, the Sonesta has its own PADI dive shop featuring shore and boat diving; a watersports facility with windsurfing, jet-ski rentals and snorkeling; and two lighted tennis courts (instruction available). Fishing and horseback riding can be arranged through guest services. Of course, there's always the option of a lounge chair un-

der a palm on the poolside terrace or the Sonesta's private beach. Babysitting can be arranged upon 24-hour notice. "Just Us Kids," a counselor-supervised children's program for children 5-13, is offered Wednesday through Sunday.

*Dress code applies after 7 pm.*

If you're looking for a little excitement, you can test your luck at the elegant **Emerald Casino** with its 5,000 square feet of slot machines, blackjack, roulette, craps, mini baccarat and Caribbean stud poker. Minimum stakes at the tables are $5, with a $500 maximum. Jackpots go up to $20,000 at the slots. Complimentary drinks are served to players seated at the slots and tables. The fine shops in the Sonesta Shopping Arcade, including Gandelman Jewelers and the Casa Amarilla, will gladly relieve you of your winnings.

After a day in the sun and saltwater, the Sonesta's full-service salon will get you ready for the evening. Guest relations will keep you informed of special events and evening entertainment. Happy Hour is from 4:30 to 6:30 pm at the Seabreeze Pool Bar, followed by the dinner hour. Delicious Northern Italian specialties, including fantastic Italian desserts, are served in an airy Mediterranean atmosphere at the **Portofino Restaurant.** The Sonesta's fine dining room, **The Emerald Grille**, features steaks and seafood, and made-to-order desserts, including fabulous soufflés. Casual outdoor dining is available at the Palm Café.

**PRINCESS BEACH RESORT & CASINO**
*Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd. 8*
*341 rooms and suites*
*599-9-367888; fax 599-9-614131*
*In the U.S., call Dutch Caribbean Resorts, 1-800-327-3286*
*Expensive*

A lovely room with no surprises and attentive service is what you should expect from the Princess Beach, a Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza Resort. Spacious rooms feature modern decor, large modern bath, mini-fridge, in-room safe deposit box, cable TV and direct dial telephone. Plus, there's lots to do. You can participate in any of the day's activities, go snorkeling off the beach or diving under the watchful supervision of the Peter Hughes Divers, play tennis, work out in the fitness center or just lounge on the beach or by the pool. Evening entertainment kicks off with Happy Hour, often with live music, at the poolside bar, followed by dinner at the Floating Market Restaurant, featuring a different theme every night of the week. The casino is one of the island's largest, with hundreds of slots as well as roulette, craps, blackjack and Caribbean poker. For a more subdued evening, start with dinner at L'Orangerie; the rest is up to you.

**LION'S DIVE HOTEL & MARINA**
*Bapor Kibrá*
*72 rooms*
*599-9-618800; fax 599-9 (618200)*
*Moderate*

*#1 Choice for divers!!*

Whether you're a well-seasoned diver or an avid beginner, the Lion's Club of Curaçao had you in mind when they planned their hotel. The first new hotel to open on the island in 20 years, the Lion's Club built the Lion's Dive as

the cornerstone of their campaign to revive tourism by promoting diving. **Underwater Curaçao**, the hotel's five-star dive center is not only the island's largest, but features the largest air station in the Caribbean, two custom-designed 40-foot dive boats, and impeccably cared-for rental equipment which is never more than two years old and includes still and video cameras. Underwater Curaçao's friendly staff of multi-lingual professionals offers all PADI certification courses as well as introductory dives.

Dive schedules are posted weekly and feature a variety of both shore and boat dives including one- and two-tank dives, night dives and wreck dives. Whenever feasible, snorkelers are welcome too. Divemasters will do their best to accommodate special requests for additional night dives, day trips and special dive packages.

Lion's Dive has plenty to keep non-divers happy. With free admission to the Sea Aquarium for all Lion's Dive guests, they too can experience Curaçao's underwater world. Fitness enthusiasts can take advantage of the state-of-the-art facilities and classes offered by the International Sports Institute Oooms. Lion's Dive also offers sailboard rentals and instruction as well as jet-skis and sea kayaks. A lounge chair under a palm on the Sea Aquarium Beach or at poolside is another possibility.

Guest rooms, most with ocean view and balcony, are set amidst tropical gardens in a Dutch Caribbean ambience. An Ameri-

can-style breakfast buffet is served daily at **Rumours**, the oceanside terrace restaurant. Shuttlebus service is available between the hotel and the downtown shopping area. Babysitting service is also available.

### THE AVILA BEACH HOTEL

*Willemstad*
*90 rooms*
*599-9-614377; fax 599-9-611493*
*Moderate/expensive*

*The Avila features modern luxury in classic old-world style.*

Nestled behind a group of tall trees on the outskirts of Willemstad is the stately 18th-century building which was originally the governor's residence, then a hospital and, for the past 40 years, the Avila Beach Hotel. Quietly refined, the Avila combines traditional Dutch Caribbean decor with modern comfort. One of the most traditional and lovely of Curaçao's hotels, the Avila does not have a casino, nor does it allow topless bathing. Accommodations, all tastefully furnished, range from standard rooms to two-bedroom suites with kitchenette and sitting areas. Practically all have an oceanview as well as a private balcony or terrace, and are air conditioned.

The Avila has its own beach, a tennis court and shady gardens, ideal for reading or just plain daydreaming. The Avila also offers its guests fine dining. Breakfast is served in a garden patio setting in the **Avila Café**. At the **Belle Terrace**, diners enjoy lunch and dinner under the shade of a giant royal poinciana on a terrace overlooking the Caribbean. Although a striking contrast with the rest of the hotel, the focal point is **Blues**, the Avila's jazz club/restaurant at the end of the pier overlooking the beach.

**CURAÇAO CARIBBEAN HOTEL & CASINO**
*Piscadera Bay*
*181 rooms, 15 suites*
*599-9-625000; fax 599-9-625846*
*For reservations in the United States, contact International Travel & Resorts, 1-800-223-9815 or Golden Tulip Hotels, 1-800-344-1212.*
*Expensive*

*Built in 1967, it was originally a Hilton.*

If swimming and watersports are your thing, then you should consider this one. **Seascape Dive and Watersports** offers a full curriculum of PADI dive instruction ranging from the introductory Discover Scuba and Resort Course to Advance Plus and Dive Master Certification courses, as well as specialty courses. Seascape also offers dive packages for certified divers, including equipment rentals, with dives scheduled at 9 am and 2 pm daily aboard their 38-foot Delta diving boat or their 22-foot offshore diving boat. Night and shore diving are also available.

In addition to diving, Seascape offers waterskiing, along with Jet-ski and Sunfish rentals, sea kayaking, snorkeling trips to Klein Curaçao, deep sea fishing and a barbecue fun trip every Thursday. Also docked at the Curaçao Caribbean Marina is the *SeaWorld Explorer* semi-submarine, which offers daily tours of Curaçao's coral reefs.

If your idea of watersports is lying by the pool or on the beach with a piña colada, and diving in for a few laps every now and again, you can do that too. In addition to a freshwater swimming pool, the Curaçao Caribbean boasts the largest natural beach of any hotel on the is-

land, with a generous swimming area enclosed by a walk-around pier. The hotel also has two tennis courts, available for day and night play, a children's playground, beach volleyball and a shuffleboard court. A shopping arcade is located just outside the hotel and complimentary shuttle service to downtown shopping is available.

Business travellers get special attention on the Executive Floor. It has a separate registration desk and offers full secretarial services as well as a daily continental breakfast in the lounge, an evening happy hour and laundry services. Banquet and convention facilities are also available within the hotel, and the International Trade Center is just steps away.

Not only does the hotel offer guests a myriad of activities and services, but four distinct dining experiences as well. American and continental cuisine are served at the outdoor **Terrace Restaurant**, while **Pirates** specializes in seafood. Guests can also choose Italian cuisine served in informal surroundings at the new **Piazzeta Trattoria** or Indonesian cuisine at **Garuda**. A Champagne Brunch is served on Sundays, and special theme parties are held throughout the week, including the hotel's traditional Monday night barbecue with a Caribbean steel band, a Mexican Fiesta with live mariachi music on Wednesdays, and Saturday night's Caribbean Buffet and Folkloric Show performed by Dushi Korsow. After dinner you can try your luck at the newly renovated casino.

Guest rooms in this highrise hotel are well-maintained and comfortable, though the furnishings are dated. All come with individually controlled air conditioning, remote control color television, direct dial telephone and large, private balcony with either an ocean or garden view.

**CURAÇAO PLAZA HOTEL, RESTAURANT & CASINO**
*Plaza Piar, Willemstad*
*253 rooms*
*599-9-612500; fax 599-9-618347*
*Moderate/expensive*

A Van der Valk hotel, the Plaza caters primarily to a Dutch clientele. Its expansive lobby is a living testimony to the days when Caribbean travel was reserved for the wealthy. Stroll through the lobby with its many seating areas, past the upscale boutiques and goldfish pond where the sounds of tropical birds join those of the waterfalls and fountains, and up the marble staircase to the Pool Terrace. From here you can take in the sweeping views of the Caribbean, the Santa Anna Bay and the Juliana Bridge. This is also one of the best vantage points for watching the cruise ships sail in and out of Willemstad.

*Sunset Happy Hour on the pool terrace is a must!*

Though the Plaza is not on the beach, it does have a dive school and rental shop, and provides guests with free transfer and discounted admission to the Sea Aquarium. Car rentals and island tours can be arranged at the tour desks in the lobby. Unlike the other five-star hotels on the island, the Plaza is within walking distance of the shops of Willemstad and fine restaurants of the Waterford Arches. Of course the Plaza also has an excellent restaurant.

The only area where you may consider the Plaza's age a drawback is in the rooms themselves. Though well-cared for, the furnishings are dated, the color scheme somewhat on the garish side, and many rooms are small. However, all are air conditioned and have color television and direct dial telephone.

**HOTEL & CASINO PORTO PASEO**
*de Rouvilleweg 47, Otrobanda*
*50 bungalow-style rooms*
*599-9-627878; fax 599-9-627969*
*In the U.S., 1-800-328-7222*
*Inexpensive*

*Curaçao's first hospital was located here.*

Don't be misled by the facade and lobby. The Porto Paseo is a garden oasis in Otrobanda. But, if you're looking for five-star luxury and elegance, you won't find it at the Porto Paseo. Rooms are on the small side, and the furnishings are somewhat dated. However, if peace and quiet are what you're after, Porto Paseo may be right for you.

The small, darkish lobby opens onto a beautiful oasis of winding garden paths replete with singing birds and leafy tropical plants that bloom throughout the year. The 45 bungalow-style rooms, each with its own entrance and outdoor seating area, provide lots of privacy. All are air conditioned and come with a TV and telephone.

An artificial waterfall spills into the outdoor pool keeping the water fresh all day long. Diving is arranged through Dive Inn Curaçao. Porto Paseo's outdoor restaurant overlooks the Handelskade just across the pontoon bridge in Punda. In keeping with most island hotels, the Porto Paseo has a ca-

sino, which has just been renovated. Slot machines are on the first floor, and blackjack and roulette on the second. Shopping and dining are just across the pontoon bridge.

## If You Really Want To Get Away From It All

**KADUSHI CLIFFS**
*Playa Kalki*
*12 two-bedroom luxury villas*
*599-9-640200; fax 599-9-640282*
*In the U.S., 1-800-KADUSHI*
*Deluxe*
Set atop a cliff overlooking the Caribbean, Kadushi Cliffs will make you feel you've reached the height of privacy and luxury. Each two-storey villa features a modern kitchen, tropical motif furnishings, and an ocean-view jacuzzi and balcony in every master bedroom. Facilities include an on-site dive shop, swimming pool and the open air Cliff House Restaurant. The resort has been carefully designed in harmony with its surroundings and is located above Playa Kalki, one of Curaçao's loveliest beaches.

**LANDHUIS CAS ABAO**
*Cas Abao*
*10 guestrooms*
*599-9-649688; /fax 599-9-649460*
*Inexpensive*
If you prefer quiet country inn or bed and breakfast accommodations in out-of-the-way locations, then the Landhuis Cas Abao is your alternative to Curaçao's resort hotels and casinos. This restored 18th-century landhouse is set amidst 1,400 acres of unspoiled countryside, and is within walking distance of the Cas Abao beach. Rooms and

public areas are simply yet comfortably furnished, in keeping with the Curaçaoan countryside. The wooden ceilings are polished to a shine, and colorful pieces by local artists decorate the whitewashed walls. The shady outdoor terrace is the perfect spot for reading or dozing when the sun is at its hottest, or for mingling with fellow guests during the late afternoon happy hour. The dining room is open from 8 am to 9:30 pm and features traditional Antillean fare.

All guestrooms are unique, especially room #4, which was formerly the kitchen. The slave huts are now suites with private baths. Friendly management creates a warm, family atmosphere.

**CORAL CLIFF RESORT & CASINO**
*Santa Martha Bay*
*P.O. Box 3782,*
*42 rooms; four suites*
*599-9-641610/641588; fax 599-9-964-1781*
*In the U.S., toll free 1-800-223-9815.*
*(In Manhattan 212-545-8469 or fax 212-545-8467)*
*Inexpensive*

*Complimentary transportation is offered to and from the airport.*

Nestled in the bluffs above one of Curaçao's best diving beaches in an area of cliffs, mountains and secluded bays, the Coral Cliff Resort and Casino affords its guests a great deal of peace and quiet along with spectacular diving and snorkeling. Thirty years ago it was an exclusive resort with a country-club atmosphere. Nowadays it is still a popular weekend retreat for wealthy islanders as well as a popular destination for dive groups. Coral Cliff Diving offers PADI certified instruction and dive trips aboard the *Orca*, the shop's 40-foot custom dive boat.

Tennis, mini-golf, beach volleyball and a children's playground round out Coral Cliff's list of outdoor facilities. In addition, a portion of the beach has been set aside for naturalists.

*Those on a budget should request a room in the older pavilion. At the time of our visit, those rooms had not yet been renovated and, though still comfortable, were lower priced.*

All guest rooms offer spectacular views of the Caribbean, and most were renovated in March 1994, along with the casino, the open-air Cliffhanger Bar and Terrace Restaurant. Sunsets are beautiful and best viewed over cocktails at the Cliffhanger.

### Apartment Rentals

If you're planning an extended stay or prefer to do for yourself rather than be catered to at a hotel, you should consider renting an apartment. An apartment is also likely to be less expensive than a hotel. Tropic Resorts Marketing represents a variety of apartments located throughout the island. Most are located in residential areas, though some are on the beach. For further information contact **Tropic Resorts Marketing** in Curaçao 599-9-372328 or 599-9-609333/fax 599-9-371210 or in Holland (31) 79-351-0025/fax (31) 79-352-1370.

## Dining

Long after you've returned home, Curaçao's beautiful landmarks will remain in your memory. Though they may have impressed you with their history, your thoughts may linger more on wine and candlelight than the Seven Years War. Several of Curaçao's most noteworthy forts and landhouses are now

***The Alive Price Scale***
*Expensive - $35+ pp*
*Moderate - $25+*
*Inexpensive - under $25*

home to the island's finest restaurants. You may find yourself dining in an 18th-century fortress far above the Santa Anna Bay one night, and having cocktails at sunset on the 300-year-old ramparts at the entrance to the bay the next. Lunch may be in a rustic setting right on the water or on the terrace of a restored *landhuis.*

Dutch and South American influences are apparent in the local cuisine. Popular dishes include the Dutch influenced *keshi yena*, stuffed Edam cheese, the Spanish *zarzuela*, a tasty seafood stew, and *quesilla,* a light custard baked with a caramel sauce. International cuisines are also well-represented on the island. When making dinner reservations, you can choose from French, Italian, Indonesian, Spanish and Continental cuisines.

Since Curaçaoans enjoy dining out, dinner reservations are advisable and even required at most restaurants all year long, especially on weekends. If you're dining at one of the more elegant restaurants, you should dress appropriately – a jacket, and possibly a tie for men, and a dress or pants suit for women. Otherwise, casual resort wear will be fine. A 10-15% service charge will be added to your bill. If not, a 10-20% tip, according to the quality of the service you received, is appropriate. Keep in mind that the service charge does not go directly to your waitperson but is also used to cover restaurant costs. Tipping is at your discretion.

**BISTRO LE CLOCHARD**

*French & Swiss gourmet cuisine*
*Riffort, Otrobanda*
*625666/625667*
*Reservations requested*
*Lunch, noon-2 pm, Monday-Friday*
*Dinner, from 6:30 pm, Monday-Saturday*
*(Closed Sunday)*
*Expensive*

*Member of the Chaine des Rótisseurs.*

When native son Freddy Berends set out to open his restaurant in the ruins of the Rif Fort, he was met with more doubt than support. Today not only has the Rif Fort become an internationally recognized historic landmark**,** Freddy's Bistro Le Clochard has earned a place among the world's finest restaurants as a member of the Chaine des Rótisseurs. Educated in the culinary arts at the Hotel School in Lucerne, Freddy has assembled a team of highly skilled Swiss chefs to create a unique menu of traditional French and Swiss haute cuisine with nouvelle flourishes. As one might expect, butter and cream sauces top the ingredients on the menu, which features beef and veal as well as seafood. But you'll also find carpaccio, smoked salmon, and a vegetarian plate.

For a truly unique experience, try **La Potence**. Cubes of tenderloin are cooked on a small red hot steel ball with skewers reminiscent of "La Potence" – a weapon used by medieval knights. The beef actually bakes on the ball, which dangles from a miniature gallows, while its juices drip onto a bed of rice. Once the beef is cooked to their taste, diners carefully remove the cubes from the skewers and dip them into the various sauces surrounding the rice. In keeping with the medieval theme, "Romancing the Stone" features your choice

of beef tenderloin, U.S. sirloin, porterhouse or a beef and shrimp brochette cooked tableside on a heated stone without fat or oil.

*Cruise ships exiting the harbor appear close enough to touch.*

The setting is as unusual as the menu. Cocktails on the terrace at sunset is a terrific way to begin. Moving into the dining room, you may be seated in a beautifully furnished cell or even a rain cistern. Small kerosene lamps provide subtle lighting, while picture windows offer lovely views of the harbor lights and Punda.

**FORT NASSAU**
*Continental*
*613086 or 613450*
*Monday-Friday, 12 noon-2 pm; 6:30-11 pm (every night)*
*Sunset Happy Hour, Fridays 6 pm-8 pm*
*Reservations required*
*Expensive*
Best at night, the view of the fort illuminated against the dark sky is spectacular. Just as beautiful is the view from the fort of the island, including the lights of the oil refinery.

Curaçao's most spectacular dining is at Fort Nassau. Perched atop a hill overlooking Willemstad and the entire island, Fort Orange Nassau was built around 1796 to defend Willemstad and Santa Anna Bay and was named for the Royal House of Orange. Faithfully preserved, the fort still serves the harbor office as a signal and control tower to monitor the opening and closing of the pontoon bridge. But it is best known as the home of the Fort Nassau Bar/Restaurant and the Infinity Night Club.

*Table #6 in the corner is a favorite of couples and is often requested well in advance.*

Crossing the tunnel-like archway into the fort, you'll feel you're stepping back into history. Yet the menu is definitely nouveau with its emphasis on originality, carefully selected ingredients and presentation. Among the dishes featured on the menu the evening we visited were a cold terrine of layered salmon and sole garnished with seaweed, served with Iranian caviar and a champagne dressing. There was also a carpaccio of fresh silver grouper, served with a pesto dressing and capers as appetizers. Main courses included fried sunfish breaded in pecan nuts, served with a coconut sauce and caramelized garlic, or prime tenderloin steak marinated in nut oil, grilled and served with potato pie and stir-fried vegetables. The dining room, with its starched white tablecloths, deeply polished wood and candlelit tables overlooking the lights of the island, is lovely. A must for a special occasion.

**LA PERGOLA**
*Italian cuisine*
*Waterfort Arches*
*613482*
*Open daily lunch & dinner*
*Moderate*

*La Pergola also operates an informal pizzeria and take-out restaurant next door.*

Though the Pergola has often been described as informal, the attentive service, exceptional selection of Italian wines, and the fine Northern Italian cuisine served here, including homemade pasta, is far from simple trattoria fare. Start your meal with an aperitif on the outdoor terrace alongside the Caribbean and finish with La Pergola's rightfully famous tiramisu. Tables in the front dining room offer a view of the Caribbean, while the dining room in the rear is more intimate.

*Unless you've rented a car, you'll need a cab to get here. Get driving directions from the front desk of your hotel or ask when you make your reservation.*

**RIJSTTAFEL**
*Indonesian cuisine*
*Mercuriusstraat 13*
*612606 or 612999*
*12 noon-2 pm; 6 pm-9:30 pm; Sundays, dinner only*
*Reservations recommended*
*Moderate*

A meal at Rijsttafel is feast for your eyes as well as your palate. *Rijsttafel* means "rice table" and refers to the traditional type of meal once served on the Dutch plantations in Indonesia and now known to Indonesian restaurants around the world. The earliest rice tables were actual tables with a hole in the center for the rice bowl, surrounded by six to eight smaller holes to hold the different dishes. Nowadays, rijsttafel refers to a selection of several different dishes, meat, fish and vegetarian, served buffet-style on copper warming trays. The Rijsttafel restaurant offers a 16- , 20- or 25-dish rijsttafel.

The thoroughly Indonesian decor features authentic batiks, copper pots and pans and wooden figurines. The owners are rightfully proud of their collection of over a hundred Wajang dolls displayed in the Holland Bar.

**TASCA RESTAURANTE DON QUIJOTE**
*Spanish*
*Gosieweg 148D*
*369835*
*Reservations requested*
*Moderate*

At the Tasca Don Quijote we treated ourselves to the best paella in the Caribbean, full of shellfish and lobster and seasoned with sherry. Though the emphasis is on Spanish cuisine, the menu features international dishes as well, with lots of seafood. Nor is

there a lack of meat dishes, with entrées ranging from chicken in orange sauce or grilled, several different tenderloin dishes and *parrilla mixta*, a mixed grill platter.

**ALOUETTE**
*International cuisine*
*Orionweg 12 (Zeelandia)*
*618222*
*Reservations suggested*
*Lunch, noon-1:30 pm, Monday-Friday*
*Dinner, 7 pm-11:30 pm, Monday-Saturday*
*Expensive*
Tucked away in a beautifully restored turn-of-the-century home in Zeelandia, Alouette specializes in the nouvelle cuisine being served in the world's most fashionable restaurants. Known as *cuisine vivant*, dishes are prepared with fresh, natural ingredients and very little fat or oil. The cozy dining room is just as attractive, with its art deco decor, stained glass windows, elegant table settings and lovely color scheme, all of which are aptly complemented by soft music. The warm hospitality of hosts Mr. and Mrs. Saban, along with the personal service provided by their staff, add to Alouette's charm.

**DE TAVEERNE Restaurant/Wine Cellar**
*Landhuis Groot Davelaar*
*International cuisine*
*370669*
*Reservations requested*
*Lunch, Monday-Friday, noon-2 pm*
*Dinner, Monday-Saturday, 7-11 pm*
*Moderate*
With its distinctive octagonal shape, bright red exterior and charming interior, De Taveerne stands out among Curaçao's finest

restaurants. As you enter this restored *landhuis,* you'll feel as if you're back in old Europe. Burnished copper, highly polished woodwork, terra cotta tiles and stucco walls create a fitting backdrop for De Taveerne's Dutch and colonial antique furnishings. The dramatic setting is outdone only by the superb international cuisine and tempting desserts. The à la carte menu is changed every five weeks.

**MARTHA KOOSJE CAFÉ RESTAURANT**
*Martha Koosje 10*
*648235*
*Local and Colombian cuisine*
*Monday-Friday, 5-11 pm*
*Weekends, noon-11 pm*
*Inexpensive*

*Located on the narrowest part of the island, known as the Heartbeat.*

In the early days, Landhuis Seru Chiki was a goat plantation and a resting place for travellers heading to and from Willemstadt. Now it's a delightful antique-filled, open-air restaurant owned and operated by Gibi and Maria Libier. While Gibi entertains at the bar or the organ, Maria is hard at work in the kitchen, overseeing the preparation of house specialties such as *La Costeña* (red snapper served with coconut rice), grilled tenderloin, octopus vinaigrette, *Mar y Tierra* (surf & turf Curaçao-style) and *cabrito stoba* (goat stew, a local favorite). Choose from among the multitude of fine wines in the cellar to accompany your meal. Afterwards, serenaded by chirping birds, you'll linger over Colombian coffee, fresh fruits and homemade desserts.

**PLAYA PERLA CANOA**
*Boca Perla Canoa*
*Inexpensive*
For real local flavor, you won't do any better than this outdoor restaurant nestled alongside a natural limestone sea wall on the northern coast. Perfect for a lazy afternoon, you can sit at the water's edge, idly watching as the surfers ride the waves down the beach or the fishermen maneuver their skiffs into the rocky shore. There's a large thatched roof for shade, and bare feet are allowed, even recommended if you're seated at a table by the water's edge. Colorful aquatic motifs have been handpainted on the tables along with the menu. Fish, of course, is the staple, much of it caught by the fishermen who live nearby, and prepared island-style. The catches of the day will be announced by your waiter. Though not needed otherwise, reservations are required for the Thursday night lobster feast. It's best to call early since there will only be as many lobsters as venture into their traps. If you want to let loose, dance and have a good time, come in the early evening or on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon when there's either a local DJ or a live band.

*See the Bandariba tour for directions.*

**JAANCHIE'S RESTAURANT**
*Westpoint 15*
*Local cuisine*
*640126*
*Inexpensive*
Be sure to include lunch at this delightful family-owned restaurant in your itinerary. Jaanchie's father opened his restaurant in 1936, and it has been an island tradition ever since – one that will be passed on from gener-

*Jaanchie's is the last restaurant on the west side of the island before the road turns north. It's a favorite lunch spot for tour groups.*

ation to generation. With flowering trees and bushes for shade, cooling breezes and birdsongs drift through the open sides of the simple white stucco dining room. The catch of the day determines the menu, which features *krioyo* (local) cooking and seafood, along with goat, chicken and steak. Jaanchie himself may take your order. You'll recognize him by his smile.

**THE LOCAL MARKET**
*Marshe Biu (Old Market)*
*Inexpensive*
If you're in Punda at lunchtime and you notice that all the office workers and shop clerks seem to be heading in the same direction, join them. They're on their way to the Local Market, and you're in for a special treat, genuine creole cooking. Don't dawdle, but follow the regulars' lead as they jockey for position on line at their favorite kitchen. The best goes fast, so you've got to be there early.

Located on Handelskade behind the post office, this large open-air structure with a corrugated tin roof, kitchens lining the sides, and long banks of picnic tables in the center, is like the barbecue tent at a country fair. It's owned by the government, which leases the kitchens to local residents. Generally, the kitchens are family-run and passed down from generation to generation, along with the recipes. Each consists of a barbecue grill with a counter alongside it.

To be ready in time for the noon rush, the local chefs come in at around 7 am, light the charcoal, which is made from divi-divi and

palu inju wood, and set about preparing that day's dishes, such as *cabrito stoba* (goat stew), *sopi piska* (fish soup), guiambo (okra soup with pork tails), *moro (*rice with beans and/or vegetables) and delicately fried fish, always accompanied by *funchi* and *banana hasa* (fried banana). Each kitchen has its own specialties and its own clientele. Special for Fridays is *toe toe*, a delicious dish made with corn meal, red beans, meat (usually ribs), brown sugar, butter, salt and melted cheese.

*This is the best place for local cooking. However, if you require air conditioning, tablecloths, linen napkins, and a waiter at your beck and call, the Local Market won't be for you.*

Many locals will order lunch to go, often bringing it home to feed the family.

**HARD ROCK SOCIETY**
*Keuken Plein, Punda*
*International*
*656633*
*Monday -Thursday, 9:30 am-1 am;*
*Friday & Saturday, 9:30 am-2 am; Sunday, 3:30 pm-1 am*
*Inexpensive*
Name sound familiar? The menu and ambience may be too, though to a much lesser extent. After shopping in Punda, come by for lunch or cocktails. Enjoy snacks and appetizers such as nachos and sate, or a full meal. The menu features burgers, salads, oversized sandwiches, grilled fish, ribs, steaks and lamb. You can sit outdoors in the shade or indoors at the bar and listen to the rock music playing in the background. And, if you're in the mood for a little competition, head upstairs, where you can play darts, backgammon and pool. Drinks are half-price and snacks on the house at Happy Hour, Thursday, Friday and Sunday afternoons.

## Fast Food

**Pizza Hut** came to Curaçao over a dozen years ago and throughout that time has consistently distinguished itself among its fellow Pizza Huts, winning the Quality, Service and Cleanliness Awards from Pizza Hut International. In addition to the standards, the menu features the award-winning *Curaçao Pizza*. A spin-off of the local *keshi yena*, it is made with Dutch Gouda cheese, tuna fish, ham and raisins. There's also a 10-layer, three-cheese and meat lasagna, plus chocolate mousse for dessert. Branches are located downtown ( 656767), at Schottegatweg Oost 193 ( 616161) and Jan Noorduynweg ( 688278).

**McDonald's** and **Kentucky Fried Chicken** both have outlets in Punda and Sta. Maria. There's another McDonald's in the Salinja Shopping Gallery. Or, if you want more than a burger and fries, **The Green Mill** is there too. Choose from the varied menu of assorted pizzas, pastas, sandwiches and Indian dishes. There's a **Burger King** on Schottegatweg Oost and an **Arby's** at Ontarioweg 6.

## Sunup To Sundown

On Curaçao you can close the deal of your life and meet with your accountants at Coopers & Lybrand in the morning, then be on the 2 pm dive boat that afternoon. If only life could always be that good. Ready for a few days off? You've got many beaches to choose from, not to mention the pool and/or beach at your ho-

tel. Why not sail to Klein Curaçao? Or, if you're feeling really ambitious, climb to the top of Mt. Christoffel. Did we mention the great shopping and beautiful Dutch Caribbean architecture in Willemstad, home of the oldest synagogue in the Western Hemisphere? And what about the casinos?

## The Beaches

Although estimates vary, there are about 38 beaches on Curaçao. Noticeably absent are the seemingly endless expanses of white sandy beach found on Aruba and featured in posters and brochures hyping the Caribbean. Instead, what you will find on Curaçao are small secluded beaches in quiet coves; hotel beaches that have been helped along by man; and a few of the type of beaches the Caribbean is known for (albeit smaller). Some are sandy, while others are made up of coral stones or black volcanic sand. Most are easily accessible by car, while a few are best travelled to by four-wheel-drive vehicle. Curaçao's loveliest beaches are along the southwest coast.

If you're looking for peace and quiet, visit the beaches during the week. It's more likely that you will have to share even the remote beaches during the weekends. Beach-going is a favorite pastime of island residents. The most popular are the Seaquarium Beach, Jan Thiel, Porto Marie, Knip, Klein Knip, Cas Abao, Westpunt Baai and Daibooibaai.

*Each of Curaçao's beaches is unique.*

What follows is an abbreviated list of a few of our favorites. However, if you've got plenty of

time, we urge you not to limit yourselves to these, but to speak to the locals, get yourself a map and explore on your own. You won't be disappointed.

One last word of advice. Beware of the **manzanilla tree**, which provides much of the shade on the beaches. Not only is its small green fruit poisonous, but when it is wet or raining, the sap that runs off the trees causes a painful irritation upon contact.

## Beaches With Facilities

*Topless bathing is quite common.*

**The Seaquarium Beach**: Part of the Seaquarium complex, this long strip of man-made beach fringed with palms attracts a largely Dutch crowd and is popular with young adults. Its quiet waters are well-suited to families with small children. Watersports enthusiasts can rent equipment. There is no shortage of *palapas*, large beach umbrellas made with palm leaves, which provide shade. Facilities include a beach bar with plenty of music, often live, and a restaurant.

The Seaquarium Beach is the closest beach to Willemstad and is within walking distance of the Princess Beach Hotel. The Lions Dive Hotel is right on the beach, and guests receive free admission. Otherwise, admission is $3 U.S.

**Playa Barbara:** Located at the mouth of the Spanish Water Bay on Mining Company property, Barbara Beach is popular with local families because of its calm shallow waters and sandy beach. Broad, leafy trees offer

plenty of shade. The beach is also a fine vantage point for watching the yachts and sailboats in the channel. There are toilet and changing facilities, and refreshments are provided by snack and drink vendors. Topless bathing, though not *de rigueur*, is tolerated.

The beach is open from 8 am to 6 pm daily. There is an admission charge of $5.75 U.S. per car on the weekends and $3 U.S. during the week.

**Cas Abao:** Definitely poster material, Cas Abao, also known as Turtle Beach, is a beautiful white, sandy beach on a cove 25 miles west of Willemstad. Underwater visibility is excellent, with the best snorkeling along the rock walls on either side of the cove. This pristine beach is maintained by the owners of Cas Abao, who intend to keep it that way. The beach is cleaned several times a day and radios are forbidden. Amenities include an outdoor bar and restaurant, and toilet and shower facilities. Twelve large palapas offer shelter from the sun and beach chairs can be rented for $3 U.S. a day.

Turn off at Cas Abao and follow the dirt road to the beach. There is an admission fee of $3 U.S. per car.

*Dive booties are a good idea.*

**Varsenbaai**: If you're more of a sunbather than a swimmer, you're better off at one of our other selections. Other than a rocky shoreline, Varsenbaii offers very little in the way of beach. On the other hand, this deep bay is well-suited to serious swimming and snorkeling. Popular with families, there is a wading

pool for young children as well as a small playground. Older kids, provided they are good swimmers, can jump off the pier and swim out to the raft. Services include a snack bar with an umbrella-shaded terrace overlooking the water.

*Topless bathing is prohibited.*

Located just east of the center of the island, admission to this private beach is reserved for member residents and island visitors (you must show proof that you're visiting the island). There is no admission fee.

## Public Beaches Along The Southwest Coast

Admission to the following beaches is free. Most offer very little in the way of facilities, so bring plenty of water and refreshments. A beach umbrella is a good idea too. All are popular with locals during the weekends and quieter during the week, except during school vacations and holidays. Beaches are accessible from the main coastal road and are listed in order from Westpunt heading east.

*Watch out for the fire coral. It causes a painful and sometimes infectious irritation upon contact.*

**Playa Kalki:** The westernmost beach on the island, Playa Kalki boasts a lovely location and terrific snorkeling. This narrow beach of soft white sand is set against a backdrop of cliffs with natural terraces. Although the water can get pretty choppy when it's windy, calm days provide ideal conditions for snorkeling. You'll find a wealth of corals in the cove, especially mountainous star coral and fire coral. If you're here in the afternoon, be sure to stick around for the sunset.

**Westpuntbaai:** Cliff diving is a popular pastime among the more daring regulars at Westpuntbaai, popularly known as **Playa Forti**. So named for the remains of Fort Westpunt in the bluffs above, this black sandy beach is on a picturesque fishermen's cove surrounded by towering cliffs. That's not actually sand on the beach, but rather very fine volcanic pebbles. They become extremely hot, making dive booties or sandals a must for walking. Conditions are generally good for swimming. Just don't be caught off-guard by the drop-off. The water, though clear and calm, becomes extremely deep quite suddenly.

*Jaanchie's restaurant, just up the road heading towards Watamula, is highly recommended.*

With the exception of the morning hours, there is no shade on the beach. Facilities are limited to a restaurant located in the ruins of the fort and nearby snack bars, which are usually only open on the weekends. If you're here during the week, be sure to bring plenty of water and a beach umbrella.

In between Playa Forti and Playa Kalki, and not far from Landhouse Wacao, is **Playa Grandi**. This rocky beach offers sparse shade but is popular with the local fishermen, who spread their nets out to dry on the beach.

**Knipbaai:** Knipbaai boasts two of the island's most beautiful beaches, **Groot Knip** and **Klein Knip.** Set on neighboring coves, both have toilet facilities, snack bars (generally open weekends only), and a party-like atmosphere on the weekends. Groot Knip, also known as Knip Grandi, is the larger of the

*Take the turn-off at Landhouse Knip.*

*Groot Knip can be especially crowded on Sundays.*

two and by far the favorite weekend destination of most Curaçaoan families. Beach chairs are available for rent, as are pedal boats. Shade is provided by the trees and by several large parasols on the beach.

Klein Knip or Knip Chikitu, as it is called in Papiamentu, is a semi-secluded sandy beach. A fine diving beach, it features crystal clear waters and a sand bottom. It too is noisy and crowded during the weekends and considerably quieter during the week, when it is favored by couples.

**Playa Lagún:** Colorful tropical fish abound in this narrow inlet, which is, not surprisingly, one of Curaçao's best snorkeling locales. Fish tend to congregate along the cliff walls. Trees surround the beach, providing plenty of shade, while small fishing skiffs moored in the inlet add a picturesque touch.

*Playa Jeremi is a popular shore dive.*

Just before you reach the village of Lagún as you travel east, you'll come to a turn-off on the right hand side of the road. It leads to **Playa Jeremi,** a rocky beach on a narrow bay. A nominal fee is charged for access to the beach.

**Boca Santa Cruz:** While the mangrove swamp surrounding this wide beach dotted with palm trees clouds the water, creating less than ideal conditions for snorkeling, it does attract a lot of birds. You can rent a sailboard, jet-skis or small boats here during the day, then stick around at dusk – the best time for birdwatching. Be sure to bring insect repellant, along with your field glasses. Local

fishermen frequently have parties here in the evening.
To reach the beach, continue east on the main road after leaving Lagún, and bear right at the fork.

## Out-Of-The-Way Beaches

Though these beaches are more remote than our other selections, they are not unknown. You need to travel down dirt roads to reach them and, since they are on private property, all charge an entrance fee per car. Most offer no facilities, so bring plenty of water, along with a picnic lunch and your dive or snorkel gear.

**Porto Marie:** There are far more beautiful beaches on Curaçao than Porto Marie. The beach itself is little more than a long expanse of coarse sand and pebbles backed up by a limestone wall. Parking is right on the beach and there is really no shade at all. Facilities consist of a small restaurant, sans restroom, which is only open weekends.

In this case, it's what's under the water that really counts. Just a short distance from shore is a fascinating double reef system. Though the main reef is fairly deep, the shallower areas are equally fascinating. Cavernous star coral, sheet coral, sponges, tube worms, flamingo tongues, plume worms, turtles, moray eels, scorpionfish, peacock flounders, slender filefish and schools of creole wrasses and schoolmaster snappers are among the many creatures that inhabit the reef.

*Porto Marie is ideal for snorkeling and training dives.*

To get there, head west on the main road along the southern coast and follow it toward San Willibordo. The dirt road to Porto Marie is almost opposite the Willibordus Church. The entrance fee is around $4 U.S. per car.

Not far from Porto Marie is **Daaibooibaai**, another picturesque inlet featuring great snorkeling along rock cliffs. If you're here at dusk, you can watch as the fishermen pull their boats up to shore.

**Santu Pretu:** Just east of Boca Santa Cruz, Boca Santu Pretu is a small quiet cove with a smooth brown gravel beach. The setting is truly picturesque, with huge boulders jutting out from the water offshore, set against a backdrop of the neighboring hills. The beach is actually comprised of volcanic pebbles, which can really heat up. You'll need dive booties or sandals.

Santu Pretu is located in an area known as Pos Spañó. Look for the sign marking the dirt road to Santu Pretu. It's off the main road just west of Santa Cruz. There's a $3 U.S. admission fee at the gate, and then you'll drive through a forest of machineel trees to reach the beach. It's best to park by the ruins just beyond the dry river bed and then walk down to the beach. If you park too close to the beach, you run the risk of getting stuck should the tide come in while you're still on the beach.

If you continue down the dirt road past Santu Pretu, you'll come to two even more secluded beaches. A rugged access road leads to **Playa**

**Hulu,** a relatively unspoiled beach characterized by rough seas and coral rubble. A concrete staircase leads to the small sandy beach. A little farther down the main road you'll come to **Boca Pos Spañó**, a narrow rocky beach in a lovely wooded setting. The sea tends to be fairly rough here, but it's a fine choice for couples seeking a quiet afternoon.

**Klein Curaçao**: Curaçao's longest and whitest beach is on Klein Curaçao, an uninhabited island eight miles off the southeast coast. There are no facilities on the island and very little shade. Daytrips to Klein Curaçao, including snorkeling and refreshments, usually a picnic or barbecue lunch, are offered by most sailboat charters.

*See* Sailing*, below.*

## Diving

*Bonaire and Curaçao share the same reef system. For a more detailed description, see the section on diving in the Bonaire chapter.*

Over the past several years, Curaçao has been enthusiastically promoting itself as a dive destination, and with good reason. Visibility ranges from 60 to 150 feet, revealing an underwater landscape of pristine reefs covered with endless varieties of corals, sponges, colorful tropical fish, sea fans, gorgonians, sea turtles, crabs, anemones and other sea creatures. Though drop-offs are normally quite steep and better suited to established divers, much of Curaçao's most fascinating underwater scenery can be explored within 75 feet of the surface. In 1993 at least 9,000 divers visited Curaçao, making over 72,000 dives. However, compared to other Caribbean islands, much of Curaçao's reef is still essentially undiscovered. And with over a hundred identified dive sites to choose from and expe-

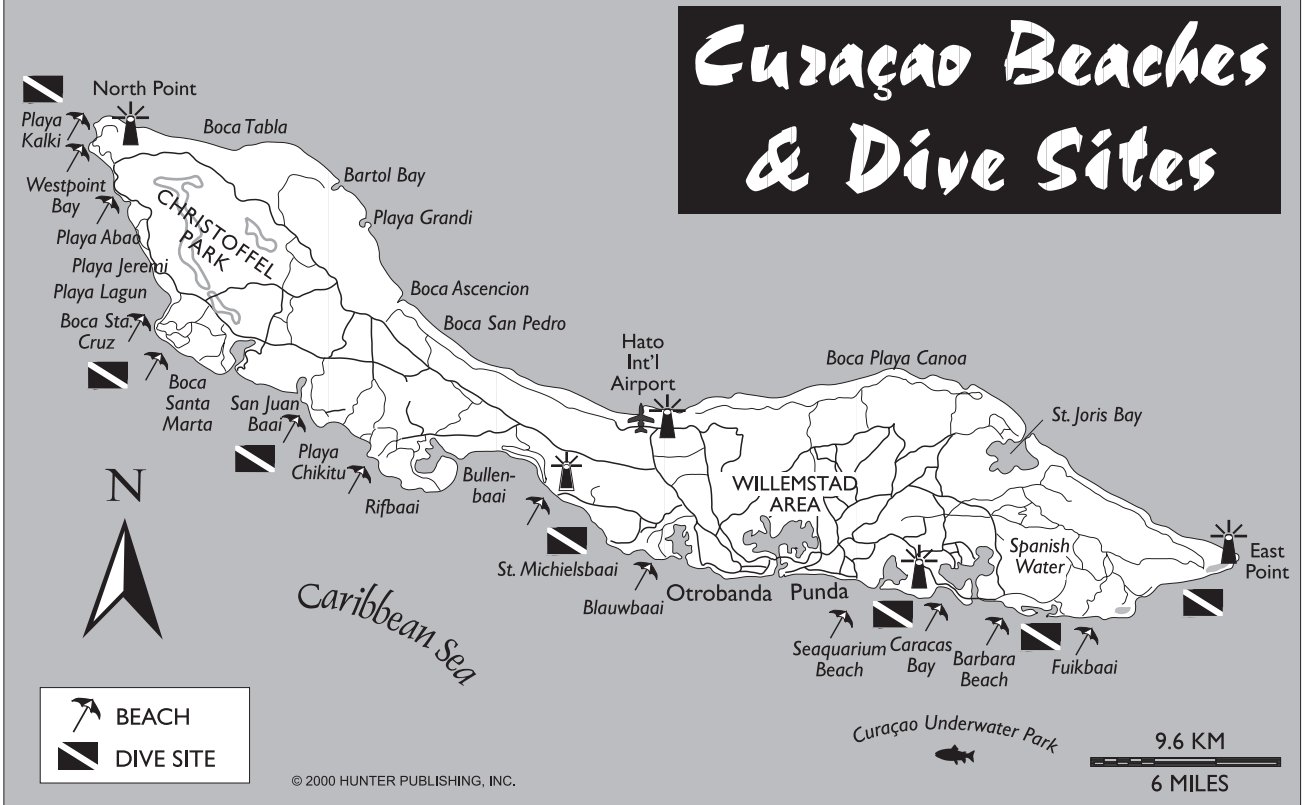
*Just as on Bonaire, diving is not recommended on the northern/windward side of the island.)*

rienced dive operations located at all the major hotels, novice as well as experienced divers can enjoy Curaçao's remarkable underwater world first-hand.

## The History Of Diving On Curaçao

Curaçao's marine life was first documented in pictures by the Austrian, Hans Hass. Unable to get a ship back to Europe, spent 200 days on the island following the outbreak of World War II. With nothing but time on his hands, Hass studied the island's marine life, taking photographs with a primitive underwater camera. Those photographs were developed by Curaçao's well-known photographer Fred Fisher and published along with Hass's impressions of the marine life off the coast of Curaçao in *Three Years At The Bottom Of The Sea (Drei Jäger auf dem Meeresgrund*).

Hass, however, was not a diver but a spearfisher, and during those 200 days he introduced the islanders to skin diving for fish. The popularity of the sport grew, peaking in the 1960's with the airing of the television series *Sea Hunt,* starring Lloyd Bridges. At the same time, advances were being made in diving equipment, making diving more accessible to the public. Several scuba clubs were founded on Curaçao, including the Diving Club Curaçao and the Antillean Scuba Divers Association, both of which offered diving instruction, as well as the SATE Club, which still exists today. SATE is an anacronym formed by the Dutch words for *Spearfishing, Diving, Snorkeling and Recreation.*


Curaçao Beaches & Dive Sites
North Point
Playa Kalki
Boca Tabla
Bartol Bay
Westpoint Bay
Playa Grandi
CHRISTOFFEL PARK
Playa Abao
Playa Jeremi
Playa Lagun
Boca Ascencion
Boca Sta. Cruz
Boca San Pedro
Hato Int'l Airport
Boca Playa Canoa
Boca Santa Marta
San Juan Baai
St. Joris Bay
Playa Chikitu
Bullen-baai
WILLEMSTAD AREA
Rifbaai
Spanish Water
East Point
St. Michielsbaai
Blauwbaai
Otrobanda
Punda
N
Caribbean Sea
Seaquarium Beach
Caracas Bay
Barbara Beach
Fuikbaai
BEACH
DIVE SITE
Curaçao Underwater Park
9.6 KM
6 MILES
© 2000 HUNTER PUBLISHING, INC.

With the arrival of Captain Don Steward on Bonaire in the 1970's, recreational scuba diving really began to take off, eventually eclipsing spearfishing in popularity. Both Curaçao and Bonaire began to attract North American divers. PADI and NAUI were being taught across the United States and divers who came to Curaçao brought with them a sense of environmental responsibility. Influenced by its visitors, in 1976 the Curaçaoan government banned spear fishing and implemented a reef ordinance prohibiting the breaking off of coral, dead or alive. Interest in diving was also growing among local residents, who began to take PADI and NAUI certification courses offered on the island.

*Two more underwater parks are awaiting approval.*

In 1983 the government founded the **Curaçao Underwater Park,** a 12½-mile expanse, stretching from the Princess Beach Hotel to the easternmost tip of the island, which is managed by STINAPA, the Netherlands Antilles National Parks Foundation. The 16 buoys within the park mark dive sites which are among the finest on the southeast coast. A self-guided snorkel trail, complete with markers describing the marine life, has been installed at buoy number three. This area was selected for the diversity of its marine life and for its unspoiled conditions. Diving sites on the western side of the island tend to be more popular, not only because the water is calmer, but also because they are more accessible. Since the land bordering much of the eastern shore is privately owned, dive sites can only be reached by boat. Plus most of the eastern beaches that are open to

the public are not as attractive or comfortable as their western counterparts. Most visitors who want to dive from shore are more likely to spend their time exploring the western beaches and dive sites.

In order to protect and preserve Curaçao's fragile reef system for generations of divers to come, dive centers, environmental protection groups, the tourism development bureau and the hotel association have joined forces in the Curaçao Diving Operators Association (CDOA). By choosing to dive with a center that is affiliated with CDOA, you will be diving in harmony with the environment. If you have questions about any of the dive sites or island dive schools, CDOA urges you to contact them at 599-9-658991.

## Just In Case

In case of a dive emergency such as a collapsed lung or decompression sickness, commonly known as the bends, contact the St. Elizabeth Hospital ( 599-9-624900), which is located between J.H.J. Hamelbergweg and Breedestraat and Pater Eeuwensweg in Punda. The hospital has a four-person recompression chamber staffed by a group of cardiac and pulmonary specialists.

## Popular Dive Sites

The coral and marine life of a typical dive site on Curaçao is fairly similar to that of Bonaire, although the slope may be less gradual. Elkhorn corals grow closest to shore, followed by staghorn coral hedges. Farther out, the variety of corals and sponges increases and is

joined by Venus sea fans, gorgonians, and seemingly endless varieties of colorful tropical fish and other fascinating sea creatures.
The list of dive sites that follows is by no means exhaustive, nor does it purport to be a list of Curaçao's best. That decision is up to the individual diver. We've selected dive sites that are suitable for novice to intermediate divers as well as snorkelers, and that are relatively easy to get to, either as shore or boat dives. For a more detailed survey of many of Curaçao's dive sites, pick up a copy of George Lewbel's *Diving and Snorkeling Guide to Curaçao.* Of course, the best way to experience Curaçao diving is with an experienced dive operator. One of the island's finest is **Underwater Curaçao** at the Lion's Dive Hotel ( 599-9-618131).

### PLAYA KALKI

*Shore or boat dive*
*Novice divers*
*Snorkelers*

Calm waters are practically guaranteed in this well-sheltered cove. A gradual slope makes it a suitable shore dive for novices. And with its crystal clear waters and coral growth close to shore, it's equally ideal for snorkelers. Both beautiful and unique, Playa Kalki features a variety of corals, including star coral in the center, with sheet or plate corals in the deeper waters, starting at around 30 feet.

### KNIPBAAI

*Boat dive (shore dive also possible)*
*Novice to advanced divers*
*Snorkelers*

Conditions vary depending on where you are in Knipbaai, with some areas best for intermediate to advanced divers. Since the best diving is about a 15-minute swim away, those planning to dive here may want to consider a boat dive. Though the shallow portions of the dive, the areas closest to shore, are fine for less experienced divers, novices would be well advised to avoid the steep deep-water drop-off.

The area close to shore is not without interest. Divers and snorkelers should enter and exit the water at the south side of the beach, staying close to the wall. Small caverns are literally swimming with copper and glassy sweepers, while orange cup corals grow close to the water line. You'll also see conch and tall gorgonians, some reaching heights of 10 feet. In the center of the cove, in less than eight feet of water, there is a ledge under which you can usually find schools of sweepers, with fingerlings, moray eels and needlefish hovering nearby.

**PLAYA LAGÚN**

*Shore dive*
*Novice divers*
*Snorkelers*

Playa Lagún offers both excellent snorkeling and comfortable conditions for beginning divers. The drop-off, in 30-40 feet of water, is not far from shore and descends at a gentle 45° angle. Snorkeling is best along the cliffs lining this narrow inlet and in the caves that have formed within them. Coral formations are bigger than life with huge mountainous star coral and exceptionally large brain and barrel corals. You'll also spot shrimp, crabs

and brittle starfish which have made their homes in tube, vase and barrel-shaped sponges, along with a plethora of gorgonians and plume worms.

**MUSHROOM FOREST**

*Boat dive*
*Novice to advanced divers*

Though not accessible to snorkelers, Mushroom Forest can be enjoyed by novice as well as experienced divers. Located between Boca Santa Cruz and Boca Santu Pretu, it consists of a shallow shelf followed by a deeper slope and is one of the most diverse dive sites in the Caribbean. You'll find an awe-inspiring variety of corals and marine life, including innumerable anemones along with lobsters, spotted drums, spotted, green and chain moray eels, and an endless assortment of tropical fish.

**WET SUIT CITY**

*Shore dive*
*Novice to advanced divers*
*Snorkelers*

Fire corals dominate this shallow dive located off the beach at the Coral Cliff Resort & Casino. It's best to wear a wet suit, dive booties and gloves, and only attempt this one on calm days. Enter the water to the left of the breakwater on the left side of the beach, where you'll face out towards the open sea. Making sure you're always in a sandy area, walk out until the water is deep enough to swim; once you've hit water that's about 10 feet deep, head left and start snorkeling.

After about five minutes of swimming, you'll come to the **Coral Cliff Drop-Off.** A relatively strong current makes this portion of the dive better for intermediate and advanced

divers. However, novices should not hesitate to dive the upper areas of the slope on calm days. Colonies of garden eels have settled into the terraces on the drop-off as well as at its base. You'll find several loggerhead and vase sponges, many up to two feet wide, large gorgonian fans and a few equally large basket sponges.

**VARSENBAAI**
*Shore dive*
*Novice divers*
*Snorkelers*
An easy shore dive, Varsenbaai is perfect for beginning divers and snorkelers, and is also a popular night dive. The drop-off is just a short swim from shore across a sandy bottom with lots of corals. It crests at 30-40 feet and has a downward slope of 45°. Filefish are common to the area.

This dive is five miles west of Willemstad on the road to Bullenbaai and Meiber. Just watch for the sign to Varsenbaai.

Government-owned, this is a weekend retreat for police officers and as such is well-maintained. It has a concrete parking lot, picnic facilities and a short pier, which provides easy entry into the water.

**BLAUWBAAI**
*Shore or boat dive*
*Novice divers*
*Snorkelers*
This sheltered cove between Piscaderabaai and the village of Dorp Sint Michiel features a wide variety of corals, including sheet, wire and black corals on the drop-off. Snorkeling is

best along the sides of the bay entrance. Rather than attempt to swim to the drop-off from the main beach, divers should drive over to the beach on the left side of the bay, where it will only be a five-minute swim. It is a good idea to dive with someone who is familiar with the site. The drop-off, which crests in 30 feet of water, plunges sharply in some places, while in others it slopes at a 45° angle.

One of the island's most popular beaches, Blauwbaai is usually crowded on the weekends. There is a small entrance charge, often waived for tourists.

**JAN THIEL**

*Shore or boat dive*
*Novice/intermediate divers*
*Snorkelers*

*The buoy is located at the drop-off.*

Park Buoy Number Four marks this dive site at the entrance to the Jan Thielbaai. Protected by a breakwater, the water inside the bay is calm, making it a fine training site for beginning divers and comfortable for snorkeling. However, currents can get rough near the drop-off, so a boat dive is preferable to a shore dive, and novices who venture out to the drop-off should stay on the inland side of the ledge.

The bay itself is relatively shallow and has a sandy bottom, which is almost covered with turtle grass. Snorkelers should explore the sides of the bay; they feature lovely coral growth, gorgonians and sea lilies. There is a coral-covered shelf on the inland side of the drop-off, which is just at the entrance to the bay. The drop-off slopes gradually and is covered with star coral, gorgonians, sponges, es-

pecially barrel sponges, wire coral and anemones. The area is frequented by spotted moray eels, porcupine fish, trumpetfish, blackbar soldierfish and brittle starfish that love to lounge on tube sponges. There's a lovely coral bed not far from the buoy, and staghorn coral grows quite abundantly in the shallower waters of the bay.

**PIEDRA DI SOMBRÉ**
*Boat dive*
*Novice to advanced divers*
*Snorkelers*
Between Caracasbaai and Jan Thielbaai at Park Buoy Number Five, this site offers three separate dives that can be done in one tank if you go with an experienced diver and plan the dive right. The first of the three is a vertical wall. Start at the mooring facing the sea and head towards the edge of the terrace. You'll come to the crest of a wall at 30-40 feet, which drops straight down to depths much deeper than you should dare to go. However, at about 70 feet there are several caves in the wall where squirrelfish tend to linger. Wire coral, black coral, large sponges and star coral grow on the face of the wall. As you move to the left, the wall gradually changes over from a vertical drop to a gentle slope, and is better suited to less experienced divers. The shallow terrace on the inland side of the buoy offers fantastic snorkeling highlighted by anemones and huge gorgonians.

**TOWBOAT**
*Boat dive*
*Novice divers*
*Snorkelers*

*Located near the eastern side of Caracasbaai.*

Just north of Park Buoy Number Eight in 20 feet of water lies the wreck of a small tugboat. It has been there since 1970 and is becoming quite overgrown with orange tube coral, brain coral along the gunwales, and plants. It's also a favorite gathering place for a colorful assortment of fish. This is a rare treat for beginning divers and snorkelers. The wall to the left of the slope is also worth exploring.

### THE CURAÇAO SEA AQUARIUM

*Bapor Kibra*
*616666 (ext. 17 to reserve for the Animal Encounter)*

Who would have suspected that hidden beneath a garbage dump and mangrove swamp lay a spectacular coral reef waiting to be discovered? Adriaan "Dutch" Schrier did. Either that or he was incredibly lucky in 1984, when he set out to build what is now one of Curaçao's top attractions and the biggest marine aquarium in the Caribbean, the Curaçao Sea Aquarium. When you visit Dutch's Sea Aquarium you can play with a stingray or go nose to nose with lemon sharks and loggerhead turtles while you feed them by hand at **The Animal Encounters**; explore a shipwreck overgrown with 90 years worth of corals; enjoy a refreshing tropical drink and Caribbean sounds at the **Mambo Beach Bar**; have lunch or dinner at the **Rodeo Ranch Saloon & Steakhouse**; and even snooze on the beach.

Though others called him crazy, Dutch, a diver and adventurer by nature, convinced several of his friends to invest in his brainchild. He also ignored the area's ominous past. In 1906 it had been the site of a devas-

tating shipwreck. Hence its name "Bapor Kibra," which means shipwreck in Papiamentu. Despite several unexpected obstacles and without the help of an architect, the Sea Aquarium was built in record time. By the end of 1984, construction was complete, and Dutch, with the help of his friend and fellow underwater adventurer Rudy Cijintje, had stocked the 46 aquaria with nearly 400 species of Caribbean fish and marine life. Now the Sea Aquarium's popularity is eclipsed only by the beautiful expanse of palm-lined sandy white beach, known as the Sea Aquarium Beach, and Mambo Beach Club, which Dutch built on the neglected shoreline. Also within the Sea Aquarium Complex is **Underwater Curaçao**, a five-star PADI dive facility, the largest dive operation on the island.

*Underwater Curaçao's staff and facilities can't be beat!*

To provide visitors with a true-to-life view of life on a coral reef, the Sea Aquarium's 46 aquaria have been modeled after the three depth zones of the waters surrounding Curaçao. Each tank is a living ecosystem, existing almost exactly as it would in open water. Representative of the shallow reef flat where depth levels range from zero to 30 feet, tanks one through 17 are characterized by stretches of sandy bottom dotted with gorgonian forests, patches of elkhorn coral, and expanses of rock covered with hard and soft corals, and sponges. The varying features of the drop-off have been recreated in tanks 19 through 31 with a series of caves, valleys and ledges highlighted by mountainous corals. Tanks 32 through 45 offer portraits of the

*Many of the tanks are sponsored by local businesses.*

reef slope, featuring fish that only frequent deeper waters.

Mixed in among those 45 aquaria is an open touch tank as well as tanks with larger open water fish. One of them is home to a very special resident: Herbie the jewfish, the mascot of the Sea Aquarium. When he was captured in 1986, Herbie, a grouper, was a mere eight inches long. Today he measures over four feet and weighs in at a healthy 188 pounds.

*The sea lions are the only foreigners in the Sea Aquarium. The rest of the marine life is native to the Caribbean.*

The deep channel at the Sea Aquarium entrance has been divided into four pools, where you'll find a pair of sea lions from Uruguay and South Africa; hawksbill, loggerhead and green turtles; nurse sharks; and lemon sharks. Two on-staff marine biologists constantly monitor conditions and make sure everyone stays healthy.

Unlike aquariums in the United States, Europe or anywhere else in the world, the Sea Aquarium relies exclusively on natural seawater and sunlight, enabling it to display sponges, corals and other marine life that would not survive outside their natural habitat. All of its aquaria and tanks are virtually an extension of the living coral reef. Skylights provide natural sunlight, while an ingenious system of pumps brings water in from the Caribbean and then allows it to flow naturally back into the ocean. Not only does the water in the tanks and aquaria have the same salinity and temperature as the water outside but, as it flows into the tanks, so do plankton and other vital nutrients. And because the Sea Aquarium is located up-current from any pol-

luting agencies, the water supply is relatively clean.

**ANIMAL ENCOUNTERS**

A natural tidal pool at the edge of the coral reef allows visitors to the Sea Aquarium the unusual opportunity to swim alongside sharks, sea turtles and stingrays. While the more adventurous types don scuba gear, non-divers can climb down into the observatory, a once-functional semi-submarine. From here they'll watch as divers and snorkelers mingle with the extra-friendly stingrays, tarpons, jacks and angelfish on one side of the pool and hand-feed fierce sharks and mammoth-sized turtles on the other. Each diver is supplied with a full tank which, when the encounter is over, they can finish with a dive at the wreck of the Orange Nassau just outside the pool.

*An invisible plexiglass barrier keeps divers out of harm's way.*

Reservations for the Animal Encounter must be made 24 hours in advance. As a wonderful memory of your visit to the Sea Aquarium, professionally taken photo or video accounts of your encounter are available.

*Great for kids!*

***SEAWORLD EXPLORER***

*628833*

*Curaçao Caribbean Hotel & Casino*

If a visit to the Sea Aquarium leaves you yearning to learn more about Curaçao's marine life, but you're still not ready to don mask and fins, the *Seaworld Explorer* is a wonderful alternative. More than just a glass-bottom boat, this 66-foot semi-submarine was developed in Australia to investigate the Great Barrier Reef. Unlike a submarine, it does not

submerge. Instead, passengers descend to the window-lined observatory in the vessel's hull, five feet below the surface. There, in air conditioned comfort, they'll watch as hundreds of colorful tropical fish glide through intricate coral formations and even a shipwreck. Able to move about the vessel freely, passengers can go on deck for a bit of sun and a change of scenery. Narrated tours of the coast aboard the Seaworld Explorer depart daily from the pier at the Curaçao Caribbean. A ticket costs $29.

## Sailing

The constant tradewinds make the waters off Curaçao a veritable heaven for sailors. Beginning and novice sailors can take lessons and hone their skills in the shelter of Spanish Waters, while experienced sailors may want to head out to the high seas. Or, if you'd prefer to leave the sailing to someone else, take a day-trip and combine a day of sailing with snorkeling and an on-deck picnic, or even a beach barbecue on Klein Curaçao. However, a day trip pales in comparison to a weekend sail to Bonaire or a mini-cruise to Trinidad or Venezuela.

**SAIL CURAÇAO**
*Spanish Waters*
*676003*
Ideally located on the bay in Spanish Waters, Sail Curaçao offers sail boat rentals as well as instruction. The basic course consists of four two-hour lessons. Its pride is the ***Vira Cocha***, a two-mast cutter that was custom-built in

Norway and is designed to remain upright in all conditions. Day sails to Caracasbaai aboard the *Vira Cocha* depart from the Sea Aquarium Marina. You can stretch out on deck, snorkel the Tugboat dive site, and eat to your heart's content at the on-board picnic. Owner Hank van Gert is a former Olympic sailor for the Netherlands.

**THE *MERMAID***

*375198*

This 66-foot motorized yacht is available for private charters for divers and snorkelers, and also offers day trips. It specializes in day trips to Klein Curaçao, an uninhabited island with a beautiful white sand beach, which is less than two hours away. The trip includes a barbecue lunch, and snorkel gear is available. Since there is plenty of cargo room on board, windsurfers and certified divers should feel free to bring their equipment (call the captain ahead of time to ensure space). Sunset Cruises in Spanish Waters are also available.

**THE *INSULINDE***

*601340*

Of Belgian origin, this 120-foot sailing ship was restored in Holland in 1987. Today it is owned by a pair of Canadians. Phil, an expert seaman, has sailed around the world more than once. Laara is a gourmet chef with experience in restaurants across Canada. Together they will ensure that you have a terrific time on board, whether you select a day trip to snorkel the beautiful reefs of Porto Marie, a weekend sail to Bonaire, or a mini-cruise to Venezuela or Trinidad. Customized packages are also possible. The

*Insulinde* boasts nine two-person cabins, including a honeymoon suite. If you opt for an overnight trip and the cabins are booked, you have the option of a hammock on deck or booking a room on shore.

### Boardsailing

Though they may prove too challenging for beginners, the tradewinds create great conditions for boardsailing (a.k.a. windsurfing). Spanish Waters offers the best conditions for beginners. Lessons and rentals can be arranged at **Sail Curaçao** ( 766003). **Top Waterports** ( 617343) at the Sea Aquarium Beach offers a variety of sailboarding equipment for all levels.

## Deep Sea Fishing

Blue marlin, wahoo, kingfish, dolphin and sailfish frequent the waters off Curaçao. Charters can be arranged through the **Princess Beach Resort & Casino** ( 367888) or the **Curaçao Caribbean Hotel & Casino** ( 625000), as well as the ***Mermaid*** (see above).

# Activities On Dry Land

### Runners & Fitness Buffs

Runners are invited to join the local road runners club for their morning jog, usually 5 to 10K. Another option is the **Koredor**, the jogging track that runs along the waterfront between the Sonesta Hotel and the

desalinization plant. For information, contact SEDREKO, the government sports department ( 614233).

Just steps from the track is the **Sundance Health & Fitness Center** ( 627740. Open: Monday- Saturday, 7 am-10 pm). It features outdoor aerobics, free weights, a cardiovascular room and a juice bar.

## Horseback Riding

**Asahari's Ranch** offers rides through the countryside as well as along the beach for beginning and advanced riders. For information, contact Alberto and Tica ( 690315). **Ranch Alegre** offers trail rides through the countryside ( 681181).

## Golf & Squash

Golfers may need to adjust their putting to allow for the sand greens on the nine-hole course at the **Curaçao Golf and Squash Club** in Emmastad. Apart from the tradewinds, it should be business as usual. The club also has two squash courts and a bar. Phone ahead for a tee off or court time ( 373590. Open: 8 am-6 pm).

## Tennis

Tennis is best played in the early morning or late afternoon and evening, before and after the sun hits its peak. Courts are available at the Avila Beach, Coral Cliff, Curaçao Caribbean, Princess Beach and Sonesta Hotels. If

you're staying somewhere else, phone ahead to find out about their guest policy.

## Day Trips To Aruba & Bonaire

Aruba and Bonaire are just a day trip away. Since ALM and Air Aruba offer several daily flights between Curaçao, Aruba and Bonaire, you can easily spend a day on either island on your own by studying those chapters in this guidebook.

## Willemstad Walking Tours

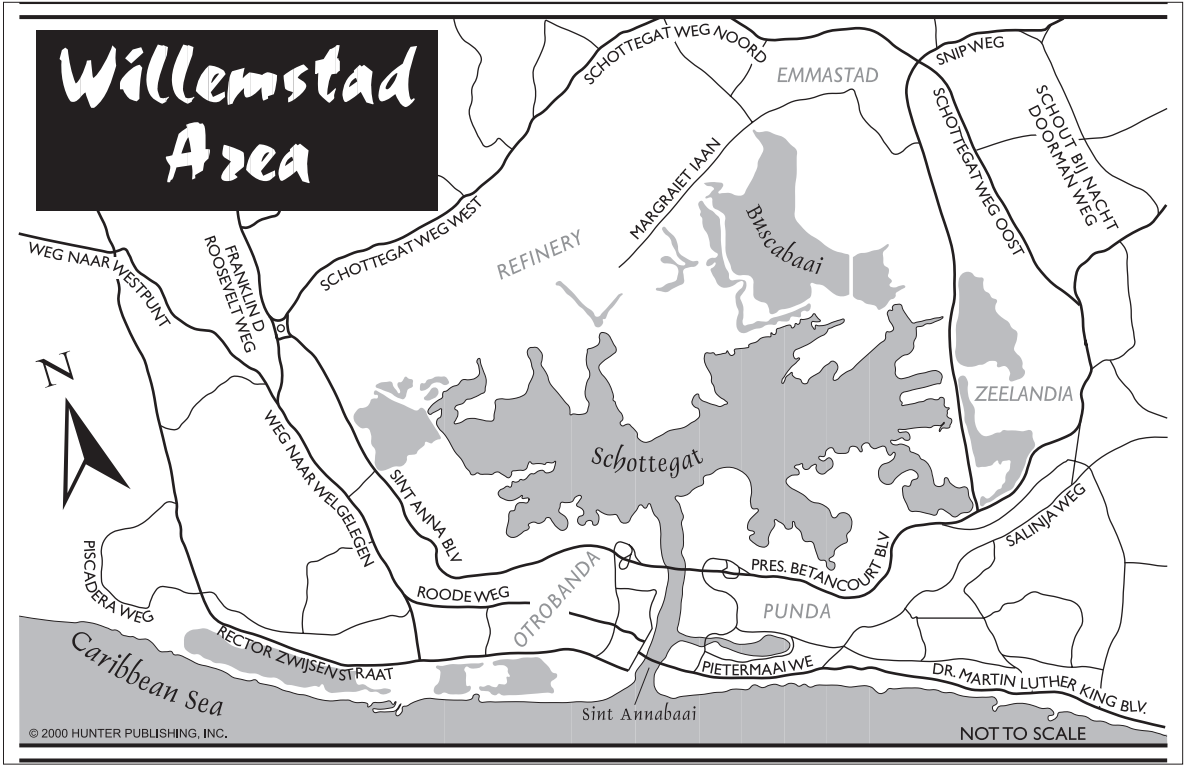
Predecessor to modern Punda, the township of Willemstad was established on "De Punt" (The Point), a naval base on the Santa Anna Bay between the Waigat Lagoon and the Caribbean. The settlement had been planned on a grid-iron street pattern and was surrounded by an 18-foot-high city wall. Unfortunately, those early city planners had not anticipated the enormous growth experienced by the city. By 1861, the districts of Pietermaai, Scharloo and Otrobanda were already well entrenched outside the original city limits and the wall was removed.

*Were the wall still standing today, Punda would fall right within its confines.*

Even with the removal of the wall, the township of Willemstad remains broken up into the districts of Punda, Otrobanda, Scharloo and Pietermaai. The following walking tours have been designed to help you discover the individual charm and style of each of Willemstad's districts.

*Punda means downtown in Papiamentu.*

### Punda


Willemstad Area
SCHOTTEGAT WEG NOORD
EMMASTAD
SNIP WEG
SCHOUT BIJ NACHT DOORMAN WEG
SCHOTTEGAT WEG OOST
MARGRAIET LAAN
Buscabaai
REFINERY
WEG NAAR WESTPUNT
FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT WEG
SCHOTTEGAT WEG WEST
N
ZEELANDIA
Schottegat
WEG NAAR WELGELEGEN
SINT ANNA BLV
SALINJA WEG
PRES. BETANCOURT BLV
PISCADERA WEG
ROODE WEG
OTROBANDA
PUNDA
RECTOR ZWIJSENSTRAAT
PIETERMAAI WE
DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING BLV.
Caribbean Sea
Sint Annabaai
© 2000 HUNTER PUBLISHING, INC.
NOT TO SCALE

The best way to appreciate Punda's rich architectural history is to look upwards. While the ground floors of most of the buildings have been remodeled to accommodate the needs of modern day shops, the upper floors have been maintained much as they were in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. It is only by studying the gables and upper floors that you'll be able to get the full flavor of Punda's architecture.

**DISTINCTIVE ARCHITECTURE**

When the first Dutch settlers arrived on Curaçao, they were faced with the dual need of protecting themselves from the blazing Caribbean sun and allowing for the circulation of fresh air inside their houses. To meet those needs, they developed a Dutch-inspired yet distinctly Curaçaoan style that would evolve over the years.

The basic style maintains the traditional Dutch saddle roof. The ground floor was usually used for storage and shops, and living quarters were on the second, with an outdoor balcony or gallery on the street side of the house. Prior to the middle of the 18th century, the gallery protruded out from the facade. Gradually, the open galleries would be enclosed with wooden shutters. Fluid lines characterized the gable above the gallery. Also characteristic of the homes in Punda is the 18th century northern European tradition of ornate Rococo gables, dormer windows, and red roof tiles.

Willemstad's earliest settlers built their homes using bricks brought from Europe to balance the otherwise empty cargo vessels

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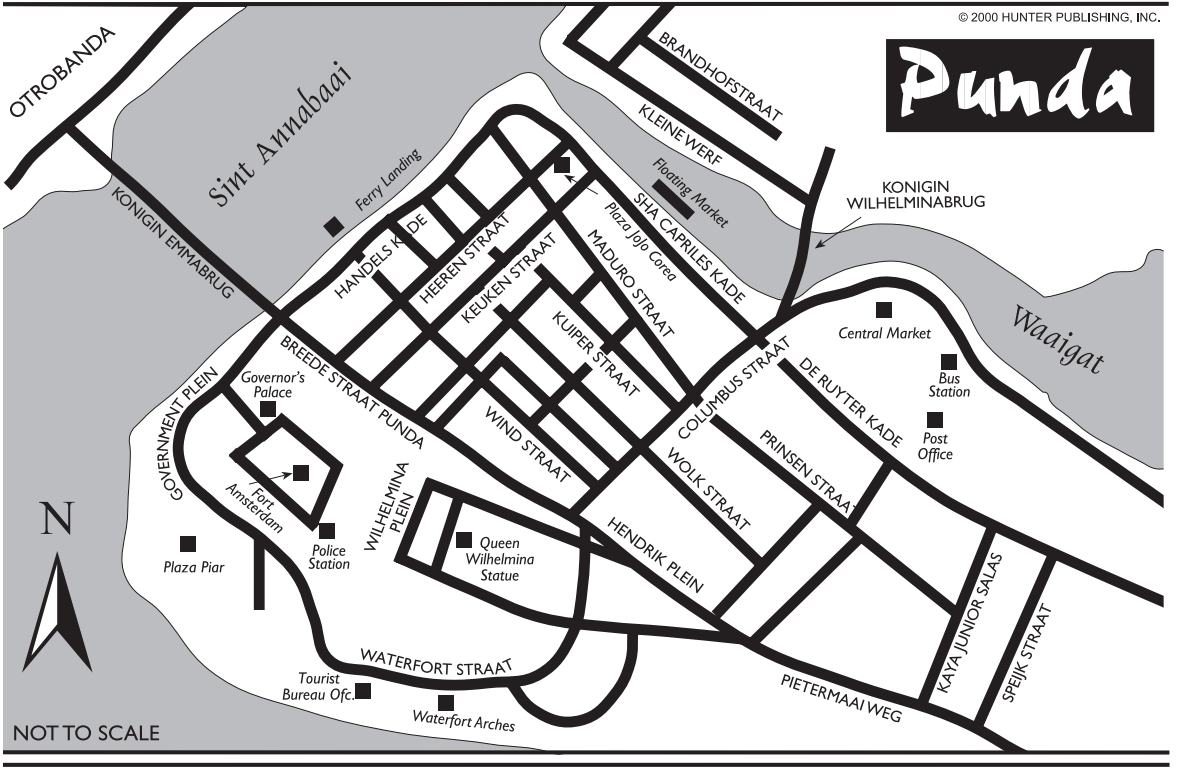


that had come to Curaçao to pick up sugar, salt and wood. Soon the supply of bricks could not keep up with the ever increasing demand, and coral stones replaced the brick. The stones were covered with stucco and painted bright colors, as required by an ordinance enacted in 1817 forbidding the use of white plaster. It seems the governor had been told by experts that the reflection of the sun's rays off the white walls would harm the eyesight of his populace.

*The Plaza is one of the two hotels in the world that carries marine collision insurance.*

**A WALK THROUGH PUNDA**

We'll start at the **Waterfort Arches**, at the entrance to the Santa Anna Baai. Built in the early 17th century to store provisions and medical supplies, they're now home to some of Willemstad's finest boutiques, restaurants and cafés. Also located here is the **Van der Valk Plaza Hotel** which, though built in 1956, uses part of the Waterfort, built in 1634, as its foundation.

*Be sure to take in the view of the Santa Anna Bay. You can imagine how well the entrance to the harbor was protected during wartime with Waterfort and Fort Riffort at the entrance, and Fort Nassau on the hill above.*

Walking along the Arches, you'll notice that there are still cannons on the battlements. The sea wall still has iron links from the heavy chain that once stretched from Waterfort to Riffort, on the opposite side, to prevent invaders from entering the bay.

Just in front of the Arches is the **Plaza Piar**. The statue of Manuel Piar was a gift from the Venezuelan government to honor this famous Curaçaoan who served under Simón Bolívar during the wars for independence from Spain. Piar was the first foreigner to become a general in the Venezuelan army. Unfortunately, he was subsequently accused of treason and

executed – only to be acquitted posthumously and declared a hero.

The mustard-colored walls on the opposite side of the square belong to **Fort Amsterdam**. Once the most important of the eight forts on Curaçao, from 1648 to 1861 it was the center of Willemstad and is now the seat of the government of the Netherlands Antilles. The Governor's Residence is directly above the entrance to the fort, while the Ministry and several government offices are along the sides. The **Fortkerk** or Fort Church is across the courtyard. Built over a vaulted cellar, it has a monumental staircase at its entrance. The stark interior is in keeping with that of a Dutch Reformed seafarer's church. Decoration is provided by brass chandeliers, the mahogany pulpit and ornate governor's pew. The church houses a small museum that opened in 1991 following its renovation.

The church has an interesting history. When the Protestant West India Company first built Fort Amsterdam, they built a church inside. In 1763 Amsterdam granted the colonists permission to restore the church but not to build a new one. Contrary to those instructions, a new church was built. Throughout the colonial period it was in a constant state of readiness in case of a siege. Its spacious cellar was stocked with provisions and it had its own cistern. Interestingly, merchants' sails were kept in the church loft since it was considered the driest spot in the fort. Still embedded in the church's southwest wall is the cannonball that was fired by Captain Bligh in

*The same Captain Bligh made famous in* Mutiny on the Bounty.

January 1804 when he laid siege to Punda for 26 days.

At the entrance to the fort is the **Monument to World War II**, which was presented to the Netherlands Antilles by the Dutch Royal Family to commemorate the support the islands gave to the Netherlands during World War II. It is a statue of a woman with a rose in one hand and a horn of plenty in the other, the work of the Dutch sculptor A. Termote. From here you can also see the **Queen Emma Pontoon Bridge**. Walk along the waterfront past the bridge to enter the Santa Anna Baai, which flows into the Schottegat Bay, the second busiest harbor in the world.

The buildings along the **Handelskade** were originally offices and warehouses. The red tile on their roofs came from Europe during those early days when Curaçao was first becoming a commercial center. The tiles would serve as the ship's ballast during the voyage from Europe and be replaced by large quantities of salt from the saltpans for the trip back. During this period, salt to be used in Holland's herring industry was the island's primary export. Running parallel to Handelskade, one block inland, is Heerenstraat. This pedestrian promenade is one of Willemstad's principal shopping streets.

Continue to the end of Handelskade and along **Sha Caprileskade**, home of the **Floating Market**, a colorful array of small fishing boats shaded with tarps. Traditionally, they sailed in from Venezuela laden

with fruits and vegetables, and headed home four or five days later, once they had sold all their produce. Nowadays, instead of making the frequent trips, vendors purchase their wares from the freighter that arrives every morning, and live on their boats for two to three months at a stretch before returning home. Also here are fishermen with the day's catch of snapper, grouper, yellow tail and other fish, fresh from the Caribbean basin. Opposite the market is the **Plaza Jojo Correa**, a favorite meeting place.

*A Walking Tour of Scharloo follows.*

A little further down on **Waaigat Plein** is the **Central Market Building,** a large semi-indoor market with stalls of meat, fish, fruits and vegetables, plants and handicrafts. It's best to come early in the morning for the best selection. From here you can see the **Queen Wilhelmina Drawbridge**, which connects Punda with **Scharloo**, formerly a wealthy residential quarter where Jewish merchants built lavish homes. In the distance, atop Mt. Arrat, with the American flag flying over its black-tiled roof, is the **Roosevelt House**. A gift from the people of Curaçao to the United States Government, it is the residence of the U.S. Consul General and part of the U.S. Consulate Complex. A block beyond the Market Building is the monument to the Antilleans who died while serving in World War II.

*For a detailed description of the Synagogue, see below, under* The Museums of Curacao.

Continue walking until you reach the Queen Wilhelmina Bridge. Turn up **Columbusstraat** to the **Mikvé Emmanuel Synagogue**, the oldest synagogue in the Americas. The entrance is around the corner on **Hanchi Snoa.** There is a privately funded

museum in the courtyard with memorabilia donated by the Jewish Community as well as replicas of the most noteworthy tombstones in the **Bet Chayim Cemetery**. The oldest Jewish Cemetery in the western hemisphere, it dates back to 1659 and is located on Schottegatweg next to the Isla Refinery.

Follow Columbusstraat towards the **Wilhelmina Park**. Several impressive buildings are along this strip, including the **McLaughlin Bank**, which was originally built as a Masonic Temple in 1869, and the **Temple Emmanuel Jewish Reformed Synagogue**, built in 1864 by a group of more liberal Jews who seceded from the original Dutch Portuguese Israelitic Community. It is painted in typical Curaçaoan fashion with its yellow walls and white trim. In front of the temple is a model of the city gate. Though designed in the 19th century, the gate was never built, since the wall surrounding the city was dismantled in 1861.

The most important building on Wilhelmina Park is the **Parliament of the Netherlands Antilles and the Court of Justice.** The Dutch coat of arms adorns the pediment above the main entrance. It was built from 1857 to 1858, at the same time as the Ministerial Council in Fort Amsterdam, and for many years was home to the Colonial Court of Justice and the Colonial Council. The building is made up of five pavilions with the principal rooms on the second floor and a prison on the first. Plans to construct a clocktower were thwarted by a lack of funds. A statue of Queen Wilhelmina is at the top of the park.

On the waterfront nearby is the **Department of Finance Building** which has been immaculately restored to its colonial splendor. Across the street is the **Curaçao Tourism Development Office**, which is housed in a Georgian-style building.

Backtrack to **Breedestraat** and then head towards the **Queen Emma Bridge**. Instead of window shopping, look up to admire the distinctive gables of the buildings, some with the year of construction on their facade. The best known of all is the **Penha Building** at the foot of the bridge, which was once a social club with a gallery from which members could look out over the bridge and the harbor. Other noteworthy buildings include the **1751 building**, now home to the Antraco Copycenter, Diva on the opposite side of the street, the small house next door to Cozzoli's Pizza, and the building that houses **Little Switzerland** and the **Casa Amarilla**.

On **Heerenstraat** you'll find a diverse group of buildings, both modern and traditional. Not to be missed are the Mother and Child facade of **David's**, the rosette that adorns the **Grand Bazaar**, and the pot-bellied columns on the **Weekender Shop**. Just after the intersection with **Sommelsdijkstraat** are four lovely and quite old facades, among the oldest in Curaçao. Truncated gables crowned by pediments characterize **L'Amiga**. The **Casa Blanca** and **Palais Hindu** boast the oldest sinuous gables on the island, which go back to 1703 (the Jewish date 5466 is on the facade).

*Otrobanda means "other side."*

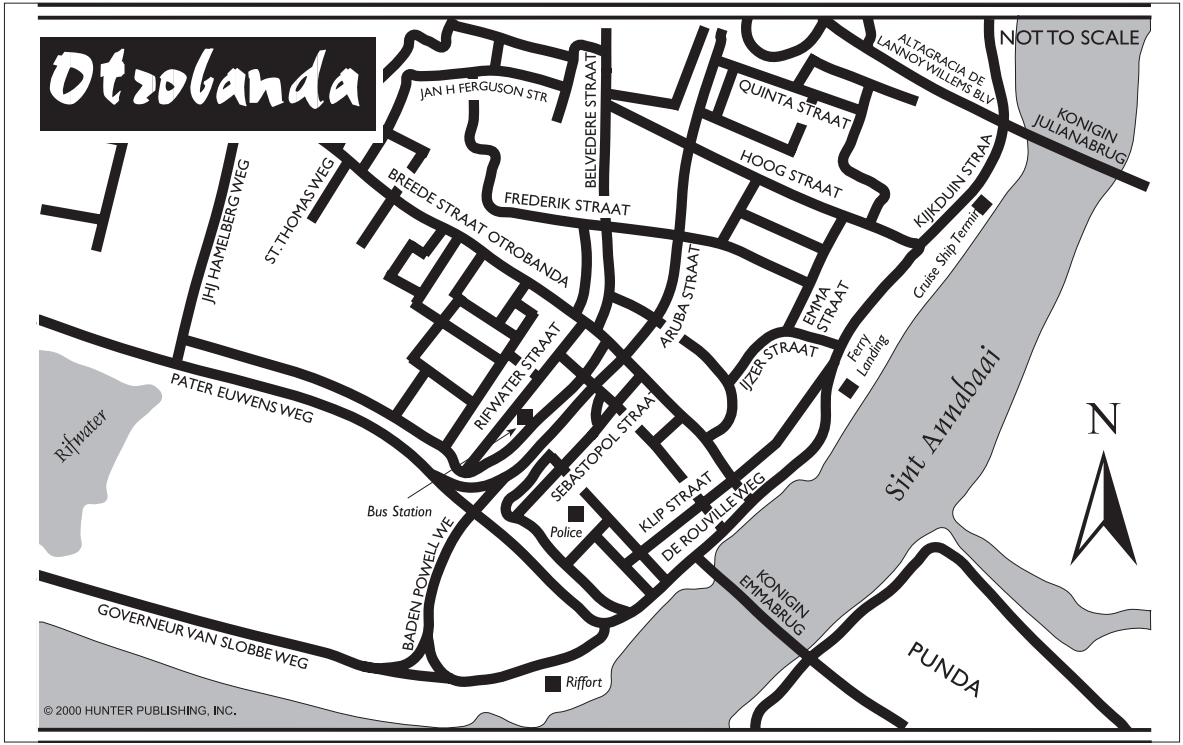
Don't miss the **Happy House**, just a little farther down. It is the oldest merchant's house in Willemstad and has living quarters on two floors instead of just one.

If you still have some time, you may want to wander along some of the side streets. There is always something else to discover. Just keep looking up at the gables.

## Otrobanda

If Punda is the brain of Willemstad, Otrobanda must be its heart and soul. As the constant influx of immigrants to Curaçao grew too numerous to be contained within the walls of Punda, Otrobanda became Curaçao's melting pot. From rich merchants who wanted to get away from the hustle and bustle of Punda, to slaves and free men, craftsmen and small businessmen, and refugees from the South American colonies and neighboring islands, a diverse blend of peoples from differing ethnic, religious and socio-economic backgrounds settled in Otrobanda.

This mix of cultures is best demonstrated by the island's universal language. Papiamentu first came into being as the language used among slaves during the passage from West Africa to the Antilles, and then became the everyday language spoken among the different racial and national groups living in Otrobanda. It's not surprising that many words in Papiamentu are strikingly similar to Spanish, Dutch, Portuguese, English and French.


Otrobanda
NOT TO SCALE
JAN H FERGUSON STR
BELVEDERE STRAAT
QUINTA STRAAT
ALTAGRACIA DE LANNOY WILLEMS BLV
KONIGIN JULIANABRUG
HOOG STRAAT
KIJKDUIN STRAA
FREDERIK STRAAT
BREEDE STRAAT OTROBANDA
JHJ HAMELBERG WEG
ST. THOMAS WEG
ARUBA STRAAT
EMMA STRAAT
Cruise Ship Termi
Ferry Landing
IJZER STRAAT
RIFWATER STRAAT
PATER EUWENS WEG
Rifwater
SEBASTOPOL STRAA
KLIP STRAAT
DE ROUVILLE WEG
Bus Station
Police
Sint Annabaai
N
BADEN POWELL WE
GOVERNEUR VAN SLOBBE WEG
KONIGIN EMMABRUG
PUNDA
Riffort
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Almost all of Curaçao's artists, poets, writers, composers, musicians, teachers, politicians and craftsmen were born, raised and lived much of their lives in Otrobanda.

**THE HISTORY OF OTROBANDA**

While Punda grew as a typical, well-planned Dutch settlement, Otrobanda's development was more haphazard, resulting in a colorful labyrinth of twisting alleyways and narrow streets, filled with buildings and peoples of all shapes and sizes.

The district's first residents were criminals and lepers who had been banished there from Punda. Due to the ongoing threat of attack by British or French forces, pirates and otherwise, no other development was permitted in Otrobanda, so as not to obstruct the line of fire from Fort Amsterdam. However, in 1707 the governor gave out 14 lots there with the express condition that only one-story houses and warehouses be built on them.

By that time Punda was already overcrowded. The large open spaces in Otrobanda presented an attractive alternative, spurring illegal building. By 1752 there were as many houses in Otrobanda as there were in Punda. Taking advantage of the available land, the wealthy built large homes with galleries on several sides. Since there was no need to build more than one floor, many of these mansions resemble *landhuisen*, the plantation-style estates that dot the countryside.

Influenced by the *landhuisen*, the mansions were built on large yards known as *kurás*. Scattered along the edges of the yard were the ramshackle huts of the poor, who paid rent to the landowner. No boundaries were drawn between the homes of the renters, whose goats, pigs, chickens, dogs and children roamed freely. Such a tight knit community was formed that the renters had virtually no secrets from one another. In fact, it was the *kurás* of Otrobanda that gave raise to the Caribbean "yard culture."

When the Queen Emma Bridge was built in 1888, development in Otrobanda escalated. Lavish homes were built on the waterfront, which at that time started before Pater Euwensweg. The reef over which Pater Euwensweg would eventually be built had not yet been filled in. Riffort was on an island apart from the mainland.

Otrobanda's glory days would not last forever. The arrival of the automobile prompted an exodus of Willemstad's upper and middle class residents, who sought the peace and quiet of country villages such as Van Engelen, Damakor and Toni Kunchi. Mansions were deserted or were taken over by the lower classes. Never a business center, Otrobanda fell into neglect. The district, which boasted a population of 8,000 residents in the 1930's and 40's, saw that number drop to fewer than 1,500.

Happily, Otrobanda is now in the midst of a renaissance thanks to the efforts of Plataforma Otrobanda. This non-profit foundation has its roots in a movement founded in

the late 1970's by the parish priests of Santa Famia and Santa Anna to counter the physical and moral decay which was then threatening the well-being of Willemstad. Now Plataforma Otrobanda works in cooperation with the Merchants Association of Otrobanda.

*A World Heritage City is one in which the historic and social development of mankind is visible in existing monuments and buildings.*

The Curaçaoan government has also recognized the value of Otrobanda, both as a remedy for the recent housing shortage as well as for its historic significance. Home to over 500 of the 800 buildings in Willemstad that can be classified as historic, the district is vital to the government's success in its efforts to get Willemstad on the list of UNESCO's World Heritage Cities. Hence much of the revitalization of Willemstad has been concentrated in Otrobanda. Entire neighborhoods have already been restored, including Sanchi and its many alleyways, Frederikstraat, Shon Toms and Hoogstrat. Residents are returning too, breathing new life into Otrobanda.

**THE ARCHITECTURE OF OTROBANDA**

The homes of Otrobanda are representative of the last stage of architecture on Curaçao. This blend of Dutch and Spanish styles, modified to suit the local climate and building materials, and crafted by local tradesmen schooled in the traditions that developed through the course of Curaçao's colonization, has gained wide recognition as Curaçao Architecture. Ample space allowed residents to construct their homes so as to take maximum advantage of the tradewinds. Windows generally opened to the northeast, with wooden shutters to block the sun while allowing the

breeze to cool the interior. Large rooms with wide openings allowed the wind to blow freely through the house. Moorish arches, reminiscent of Andalusia, supported the roof and upper floors. Living quarters, which were typically on the ground floor, were set back, so as to be sheltered from the heat of the sun.

Among the noteworthy buildings in Otrobanda is the **Santa Anna Basilica** at Breedestraat 31. Built in 1734, it is the oldest church in the Antilles and one of the world's smallest. Others include the **Curaçao Museum**, built in 1853, which was originally a military hospital; the **Otrobanda Police Station** on Molenplein; and the **Sebastopol Mansion**, located not far from the bus terminal. Watch for these buildings as you wander through Otrobanda.

**WALKING TOUR OF OTROBANDA**

Since wandering aimlessly is a great way to see Otrobanda, rather than provide you with a rigid route, the following are suggestions to guide you as you wander along the winding streets and narrow alleyways. Otrobanda is small enough that you shouldn't worry about getting lost.

Start on **Brionplein**, adjacent to the Queen Emma Bridge. At its center is a statue of Admiral Pedro Luis Brion, a Curaçaoan aide to Símon Bolívar. Walk along the waterfront on **De Rouvilleweg**, heading away from Riffort and towards **Breedestraat**, the main shopping street in Otrobanda. Be sure to take a moment or two to admire the view of

Handelskade across the bay in Punda. The 18th-century design of its buildings contrasts with the style of the buildings of Otrobanda, most of which were built 150 years later. You'll pass **Koral Agostini**, one of Otrobanda's renovated buildings; it now houses shops, bars and restaurants. A little farther down, just opposite the Cruiseship Terminal, you'll come to **Porto Paseo**, another group of restored buildings that includes the Porto Paseo Hotel & Casino.

Turn up **Ijzerstraat** or **Hoogstraat** to **Emmastraat**. You'll pass several impressive homes, many with well-tended gardens. Turn right onto **Frederikstraat.** Many houses in this area have been restored for use as government buildings. Wander a little along **Willemstraat.** Try to head in the direction of the open Caribbean in order to make your way over to **Breedestraat**. Turn down the hill and head back to the waterfront, taking time to browse in the quaint shops, with their displays of household goods and curiosities.

To explore the area behind Brionplein, stroll up **Consciëntiesteeg**, which runs parallel to Breedestraat. Turn towards the sea and wander along the narrow winding streets. Don't miss the **Sebastopol House** at 26/28 Sebastopolstraat, which has been restored by its private owners. You may want to take a detour along **Hanch'i de Lannoy**, a narrow alley leading to Breedestraat. If you continue up Consciëntiesteeg, the street name will change to **Hanch'i Lou de Windt** after the overpass, to end in front of a lovely restored home dating back to 1788.

From there, turn left onto **Schrijnwerkersstraat** and wander along the narrow alleys. We recommend that you turn onto **St. Martinsteeg** and then left onto **Zaantijessteeg** and right onto **Gravenstraat**, which backs up to the most stately homes in Otrobanda. These homes were built along the reef prior to the construction of the Pater Euwensweg.

**Sabasteeg** boasts two especially impressive homes. White with blue trim, **Stroomzigt** is owned by the artist/physician Chris Engels, whose work at restoring the mansion is depicted in a mural on the wall beside the entrance to the kitchen. The house was built in two stages. The main wing in the rear was built during the second half of the 18th century, while the imposing multi-story wing in front was added in the 19th century. The yellow building next door is the **Freemason's Lodge.**

Standing in stark contrast to its neighbors is **Batavia**. This house owes its bright red exterior to the color of a winning lottery ticket purchased by its owners. All of the other houses owned by this family are painted the same bright red color. When in bloom, the poinciana in the backyard creates an entirely new palette of reds. Across the street, Otrobanda, the Caribbean and the sky are beautifully reflected in the glass walls of the **SVB Building**. Built a century after most of its neighbors, this modern building was carefully designed to blend into the neighborhood.

Make your way back to Gravenstraat, which eventually changes name to **Bajonetstraat**, and follow it to **Gasthuisstraat**, where there is a house with wooden shutters and the date 1857. Turn right onto Gasthuisstraat, whose tiny homes contrast sharply with the stately mansions you've seen so far. Gasthuisstraat runs into **Zaantijessteeg**, which takes you back to Breedestraat via **Elleboogstraat**. Finally walk along the waterfront to the **Riffort.** On **Molenplein** you'll pass a restored merchant's house with graceful dormer windows, unusually shaped gables and a double staircase dating back to 1750.

Hopefully you've timed your walk to arrive at Fort Riffort around 5 pm, just in time for cocktails on the **Waterside Terrace**. If not, you should still take in the view of the floating bridge and harbor from the restored ramparts.

## Scharloo & Pietermaai

By the beginning of the 19th century, Punda was becoming quite crowded. Rich merchants, primarily members of Curaçao's Jewish community, began to build lavish homes on the north side of the Waigat Lagoon in Scharloo, a suburb of Punda. Influenced by European and North American Classicism, a new architectural style developed. Classic lines replaced the ornate rococo flourishes that were then the trademark of the gables in Punda.

The floorplan was also unique. A variation on the *landhuis* plan, living quarters were still

located upstairs. Front and back galleries were added, with additional wings on the sides to form the signature open patio in the center which was decorated with ceramic tiles, fountains and classical pillars. In later years, the classic lines would be replaced by the more decorative South American Vermicelli style.

**A WALK THROUGH SCHARLOO & INTO PIETERMAAI**

Cross the Waigat Lagoon into Scharloo via the picturesque **Queen Wilhelmina Bridge** and walk up Wilhelmina Straat to **Scharloo Weg**, where you should turn right. Just off Scharloo is the **Símon Bolívar Plein**. At its center is a statue of Símon Bolívar presented to Curaçao by the Venezuelan government as a symbol of everlasting friendship. Also on the plaza is a bust of Luis Brion of Curaçao, who served as Commander in Chief of the Venezuelan Army during the Wars of Independence.

Several lovely buildings are on Scharloo Weg, including the **Ashkenazim Synagogue** at #39, which was built by the Eastern European Jews who settled in Curaçao in the 1930's; and the **Civil Registry Building** at #150-152, with its lovely gables and open gallery. Popularly known as the **Bolo di Bruid**, which means Wedding Cake in Papiamentu, the South American Vermicelli-style **Central Historic Archives** at #77 was built by the Da Costa Gomez family in 1918. Its design was inspired by the Spanish Embassy in Caracas.

Continue down Scharloo Weg until it changes name to **Oranjestraat** and then turn right onto **Helenastraat**. This will take you down to **Penstraat** which runs along the sea. At the foot of Helenastraat at Penstraat #126-8 is the **Octagon**. Símon Bolívar's sisters lived in this building, as did the Liberator while in exile in 1811. It now houses a small museum featuring antiques and exhibits from the period of South America's Wars of Independence from Spain.

Next door to the Octagon is the **Avila Beach Hotel**. Once known as *La Belle Alliance*, its main building dates from the late 1700's and served as the governor's residence from 1812 through 1825 when the British occupied the island. It continued as such under Dutch rule until 1828.

To return to Punda, continue along Penstraat, which will become **Pietermaai Weg** when you enter the Pietermaai district, finally becoming **Breedestraat** in Punda. Marking the border between Pietermaai and Punda is a model of the 19th-century city gate, which was never actually constructed since the wall around the city was taken down in 1861.

## The Bridges Of Willemstad

**THE QUEEN EMMA BRIDGE**

It's hard to think of anything more delightful than strolling across the Queen Emma Bridge at sunset. Especially if you're on your way to Happy Hour at the Plaza Hotel or Bistro Le Clochard's Harbourside Terrace. Resting

atop 15 pontoons and powered by two motors attached to the last one, this pontoon swing-bridge stretches 551 feet across the Santa Anna Bay to link Punda and Otrobanda. It opens up to 30 times a day to let ships pass. When open, a ferry will transport pedestrians to the other side for free. The opening of the bridge is announced by sirens and a blue flag raised outside the small shack by the bridge. Pedestrians hurry to cross the bridge before the barrier comes down.

The original bridge was built in 1888 under the direction of the United States Consul L.B. Smith, who would hold the concession to the bridge for the next 30 years. Until 1934, four years after the bridge was sold to the Curaçaoan government, users of the bridge had to pay a toll. An exception was made for those who were so poor that they hadn't enough money to buy shoes. Needless to say, the general population caught on and would take off their shoes and hide them in order to cross for free.

The current bridge was built in 1939 and is the third one. With the opening of the Queen Juliana Bridge, it is now reserved for pedestrians only.

**THE QUEEN WILHELMINA BRIDGE**

A small dock in the Waiagat, the inlet off the Santa Anna Bay, once necessitated the construction of the Queen Wilhelmina Bridge to link the commercial areas of Punda with Scharloo. Originally a drawbridge, when the dock was demolished the bridge was converted to a regular bridge. Now it serves more as a remnant of the past.

**THE QUEEN JULIANA BRIDGE**
The Queen Juliana Bridge towers 185 feet above Santa Anna Bay, offering motorists a panoramic view of Willemstad and a highway bypass of the Schottegatt. This four-lane, 3,400-ton bridge was constructed at a cost of $30,000,000 and 14 lives. Use is reserved to motor vehicles only. Pedestrians and bicycles are prohibited.

## The Forts Of Willemstad

**THE WATERFORT**
When it was first built in 1634, the Waterfort was intended to serve as the primary outer defense of Punda. It was replaced in 1827 by an even larger structure that spanned the entire waterfront, adding 136 turrets and vaults for supplies, stables and a military hospital. Troops were housed there during World War II and coastal and anti-aircraft artillery were mounted on its walls.

With the return to peaceful times, the key to the Waterfort was ceded to the local hotel corporation in 1957. A hotel was built which, then operated by the Intercontinental Hotels, is now the Curaçao Plaza. The eastern end of the fort has undergone a renovation and is now home to the Waterfort Arches, a complex of restaurants and shops.

**RIF FORT**
Across the harbor entrance from Waterfort, the Rif Fort was built in 1828 to defend the outer section of Otrobanda and to form a dual

defense with Waterfort. To prevent enemy ships, especially submarines from entering the harbor during World War II, a steel net was stretched across the bay between the two forts. Since the War, the Riffort has housed the Harbor Authority, Public Works, the police and the Boy Scouts.

The fort is undergoing a complete restoration. The battery ramparts have been restored and are now home to the Bistro Le Clochard Restaurant and the Harbourside Terrace.

**FORT NASSAU**

Fort Nassau's history goes back to 1797 when it was built for the defense of the Santa Anna Bay and the City of Willemstad. It was named for the Royal House of Orange – Fort Oranje Nassau. Among the best preserved of the island's forts, it remains mostly intact and functions as a harbor office and signal and control tower to regulate the opening and closing of the Pontoon Bridge. A favorite panoramic viewpoint, it is home to Fort Nassau, one of the island's finest restaurants, and a small nightclub.

**FORT WAAKZAAMHEID**

Victim to Captain Bligh of *Mutiny on the Bounty* in a 26-day siege in 1804, only ruins remain of this fort in the hills overlooking Otrobanda, not far from the Juliana Bridge. During World War II, the Americans mounted guns and established barracks and an observation post there. Today it is home to the Fort Waakzaamheid Restaurant.

**FORT BEEKENBURG**

From 1701 to 1704 Director van Beek designed the plan for the defense of Willemstad. Recognizing that the outer bays were the weak points in Curaçao's defense, in 1703 he ordered the construction of Fort Beekenburg at Caracas Bay to protect the Spanish Waters. The fort served as a key defense point in battles waged against invading pirates, the English and the French throughout the 18th century. It is relatively well-preserved with its tower still intact.

**FORT AMSTERDAM**

After the Dutch conquered Curaçao, their immediate concern was to secure the Schottegat. Construction of Fort Amsterdam was begun almost immediately. Though the original design called for five bastions placed equidistant from each other, the fifth at the seaside was never built. The fort is four sided, with a bastion at every corner.

Forced to substitute rock for their usual brick walls, the Dutch built Fort Amsterdam with coral stones found along the coast and rocks from the tops of the hills cemented together with a mixture of silt, sand and clay. To make the fort appear more imposing to attackers than it actually was, the limited quantity of bricks they were able to import from Holland were used to cover the wall facing the sea. A brick wall would have been much stronger than the wall as it was actually built. But the ships of that time could not have carried all the bricks needed to construct an entire fort. Fort Amsterdam is one of the few forts built in this fashion.

With its only cannons located on the corner bastions, the defense provided by Fort Amsterdam proved dangerously limited. Once the Waterfort was completed in 1827, Fort Amsterdam was no longer needed. From then on, it was used, as it still is today, primarily as a residence for high ranking government officials and officers, as well as for government offices.

*Most of Curaçao's museums charge a nominal admission fee.*

## The Museums Of Curaçao

### MIKVÉ ISRAEL EMANUEL SYNAGOGUE & JEWISH CULTURAL MUSEUM

*Columbusstraat and Hanchi di Snoa*
*611633*
*Monday-Friday, 9 am-11:45 am; 2:30-5 pm*
*Closed Jewish and public holidays*
*Small donation requested*
*Services: Friday, 6:30 pm; Saturday, 10 am*

Hidden behind the thick yellow walls at the corner of Columbusstraat and Hanchi di Snoa in Punda is the Mikvé Israel-Emanuel Synagogue, the oldest synagogue in the Americas and Willemstad's most priceless treasure. Built in 1732, its yellow facade and gabled roof are reminiscent of 17th-century Amsterdam. Not surprisingly, its design seems to have been based largely on that city's old Portuguese Synagogue. In the wall surrounding the synagogue are four large portals leading to the Spanish-tiled courtyard. Three are on Columbusstraat; the fourth and most frequently used portal is on Hanchi di Snoa.

*Hanchi di Snoa means "Synagogue alley." In the 17th century, this street was called Joodenkerkstraat or Jewish Church Street, and later Kerkstraat. To mark the 250th Anniversary of the Synagogue in 1982, it was renamed Hanchi di Snoa.*

Entering the courtyard, it's hard to miss the buttresses on the facade of the synagogue. Rather than provide support, they serve as

drainage canals for rainwater. Along the courtyard walls are reproductions of tombstones from the Bet Chayim cemetery. As you pass through the heavy mahogany doors into the sanctuary, you'll be awestruck by its quiet splendor, just as worshippers have been for centuries.

The gentle white interior, with its richly carved mahogany fixtures, provides a welcome respite from the dazzling brightness of the Caribbean sun. Four magnificent brass chandeliers, each with 24 sconce candlesticks, are suspended from the lofty ceiling, while the floor is covered in a thick blanket of soft, white sand. The chandeliers are copies of those in the Portuguese Synagogue in Amsterdam. Two of them, dated 1707 and 1709, were brought over from Holland and used in the original synagogue built in 1703.

The sand is as functional as it is symbolic. Many believe it to represent the journey of the Israelites across the Sinai Desert to freedom. Others believe that the sand recalls the promise God made to Abraham in the Book of Genesis to multiply his descendants "...as the sand which is on the seashore" (Gen. 22:17). From a more practical standpoint, during the time of the Inquisition it had been the custom of Jews in Spain and Portugal to hold services in secret, using sand to quiet their footsteps. Though long since replaced by cement, the original floor in the Synagogue was made of hollow wooden planks, which were then covered with sand in order to quiet the sounds of footsteps during services.

The Synagogue's original pipe organ is located in the balcony above the entrance. Built in 1866

in Amsterdam, it is no longer functional and has been replaced by an electronic organ. Within the heavy, silver-trimmed, mahogany Hekhal (Holy Ark) on the east wall of the Sanctuary are 18 Torah Scrolls, several of which are older than the Synagogue.

**The Jewish Cultural Museum** is located in the 18th-century residence of the first Rabbis. One of the most beautiful of Willemstad's restored buildings, its columned facade is richly adorned with jugs along the sides and flowers in its center. A shield on the outside wall facing the street contains the date 1728. The museum's second building was the "Bath-house." The "Mik Vah" or Ritual Bath is at the entrance to the museum.

Established in 1970, the museum is home to a collection of ceremonial and cultural objects representing nearly four centuries of Sephardic life on Curaçao. Much of the collection has been donated by members of the island's Jewish community and many objects, including a Torah scroll dating from 1492, circumcision chairs, Torah Crowns, Hanukah lamps, a large collection of prayer books, a silver wedding tray, and "Ketubot," hand-decorated marriage contracts, are still used today. Upstairs, a table has been set for seder using 17th- and 18th-century silverware and ritual objects for the celebration of Passover. In the courtyard are replicas of tombstones from the Bet Hayim cemetery.

*A guide to the Synagogue can be purchased in the museum gift shop, as can mezuzahs, seder plates and other items.*

**CURAÇAO MUSEUM**
*Anthony v. Deeuwenhoek Straat*
*Otrobanda*

*623873*
*Monday to Friday, 9 am-12 noon; 2-5 pm*
*Sunday, 10 am-4 pm*
The Curaçao Museum offers a glimpse back in time both to Curaçao's colonial and its Indian past. Featured in the permanent collection are sculptures, art, architecture, antique furnishings, and even an old fashioned Curaçaoan kitchen, authentic right down to the traditional white dot-on-red-wall motif designed to keep dizzy flies out. Also part of the collection are archaeological artifacts found in sites formerly inhabited by Indians. A museum showpiece is the stained glass map of the Caribbean. Special exhibits are a frequent feature.

The building that houses the museum was originally designed as a military hospital and built in 1853. The architect based his plan on the typical Curaçaoan *landhuis.* The dispensary storerooms and sickrooms were on the ground floor, which was purposely kept open to the tradewinds in order to prevent bacteria from settling and spreading.

**FORT CHURCH MUSEUM**
*Fort Amsterdam*
*611139*
*Monday-Friday, 8 am-12 noon; 2-5 pm*
Located in the oldest church on the island, the Fort Church Museum appropriately features antique churchware and artifacts dating back to 1635, including copies and reprints of rare maps, silver chalices, offering plates, lace christening gowns from the last century and a silver and mahogany baptismal font which is still in use. A small museum shop features

books and postcards. Private tours can be arranged in English or Dutch.

**BOLÍVAR MUSEUM**
*Penstraat 126-8*
This two-story octagonal building, popularly known as the Octagon, was home to exiled Venezuelan freedom fighter Simón Bolívar and his two sisters, from 1811 to 1812. Their time on Curaçao is commemorated with period furniture, maps, etchings and documents relating to the liberation of the South American contingent.

**THE CURAÇAO POSTAL MUSEUM**
*Corner of Keukersenstraat and Kuiperstraat*
*658010*
*Monday-Friday, 9 am-5 pm; Saturday, 10 am-3 pm*
Curaçao's history is depicted in stamps, cancelled envelopes, and assorted postal artifacts. The only museum of its kind in the Caribbean, it's located in the oldest building in Punda (1693).

**NUMISMATIC MUSEUM**
*Central Bank of the Netherlands Antilles*
*Breedestraat*
*613600*
*Monday-Friday, 8:30-11:30 am; 2-4:30 pm*
A fine collection of rare coins dating back to the early 19th century, along with cut and uncut gemstones are proudly featured in the bank's collection.

**TELE MUSEUM**
*Wilhelmina Plein*
*9 am-12 noon; 1:30-5 pm*

Modeled after Stockholm's Tele Museum, Curaçao's newest museum traces the history of the telecommunications equipment used on the island, from inception to modern times. Included among the exhibits is a replica of a century-old optic telegraph.

**GALLERY 86**
*Punda*
*613417*
*Monday-Friday, 9:30-noon; 3-5:30 pm*
*Saturday, 9:30-12 noon*
Gallery 86 features a permanent exhibit of works by local and Caribbean artists along with monthly expositions.

**COUNTRY HOUSE MUSEUM**
*Road to Westpunt*
*642742*
*Daily, 9 am-4 pm*
This authentic *kunuku* house dates back to the middle of the last century. It's built from limbs of divi-divi trees that have been woven together, packed with mud and dung, and then covered with lime and aloe. Tree limbs and cornstalks are woven together to form the roof. Inside is a display of period tools, furniture and clothes**.** As was typical of the times, the kitchen is outside with a clay bread oven as its centerpiece. Refreshments are served daily, with live local music and an arts and crafts show held the first Sunday of the month.

## Other Attractions

**AMSTEL BREWERY TOURS**
*612944*
*Tuesday and Thursday mornings at 9:30 am*

Desalinated sea water and ages of Dutch tradition and experience go into the local brew. Beer aficionados won't want to miss this one.

**BOTANICAL GARDEN & ZOO**
*Chuchubiweg*
*378500*
*Daily, 9 am-5:30 pm*
Best visited with kids, the zoo features flamingos, bears, lions, monkeys and assorted creatures. There is also a small playground and souvenir shop.

**SENIOR CURAÇAO LIQUEUR DISTILLERY**
*Lanhuis Chobolobo, Salinja*
*378459*
*Monday-Friday, 8 am-12 noon; 2 pm-5 pm*
Often imitated, but never duplicated, the authentic Curaçao liqueur is still made just as it was over a century ago with that special ingredient found only on Curaçao – the *laraha*. The result of a failed effort by the Spanish to grow Valencia oranges on Curaçao, this bitter, inedible fruit was abandoned until decades later when its secret was discovered. When dried in the sun, its rind contains a fragrant oil that is the essential ingredient of the Curaçao liqueur. For over a century the Senior family has been making this world famous liqueur according to the family recipe. Their history and that of the factory is documented through pictures and artifacts in the distillery that is still operating just as it did in the 1800's.

Landhouses played an important role in Curaçao's history. Many have been renovated and are now lovely restaurants, guesthouses and museums. Try to visit at least one or two as you explore the island.

Despite the fact that agriculture was not a viable industry, Curaçao's settlers wanted to live the dream of the Caribbean colonist – to be lord and master of an island plantation, complete with a spacious plantation house and large tract of land. Curaçao's earliest plantation houses, or *landhuisen* as they were called by the Dutch settlers, were built during the latter part of the 17th century by the directors and officials of the Dutch West India Company. During this period the salt trade was the island's primary source of income. Demand for salt was great, especially by the Dutch herring industry. To meet the demand, saltpans were built on the western side of the island, forming a close knit group of salt plantations, including Santa Cruz, Groot Santa Martha, Jan Kok, Knip, Savonet and Ascensión.

*Plantations, such as Knip which raised sheep and cattle, would also have corrals.*

Since roads had not yet been built, the salt would be transported in small boats along the coast to Santa Anna Bay, where it would be transferred into larger ocean-going vessels. Supposedly the salt harvested at Ascensión, the landhouse closest to the north coast, was miraculously transported via the rough windward seas and around Oostpunt to Santa Anna. Over time, primitive roads were built, making it possible to transport salt via donkey as well. As roads improved, plantation

owners began building coach houses and stables for their horses and donkeys.

Faced with lower priced competition from other islands, Curaçao's salt trade began to dwindle in the early years of the 19th century. In the 1840's, many plantation owners crossed over into agriculture, but met with little or no success after attempting to grow sugar, cotton, tobacco and silkworms for export. Those who cultivated aloe vera and cochineal, which were better suited to the island's harsh, arid climate, were only marginally successful.

Luckily, most plantation owners were not dependent upon agriculture for their livelihood. By the 19th century, Curaçao had become a commercial center. Many plantations were owned by "absentee landlords," who lived in town and made their living as government officials, bankers or merchants while an overseer managed their country estate. The *landhuis* was more a status symbol than anything else.

Even greater was the prestige of not just owning a landhouse, but having slaves as well. But unlike other islands where plantations often had slaves by the hundreds, most of whom worked in the fields, few plantation owners on Curaçao owned more than 10 slaves. This was understandable given the small role agriculture played in the Curaçaoan economy. So it's not surprising that most owners were on familiar terms with their slaves. It was not unusual for the do-

mestic or house slaves to be the mulatto descendants of the landowner himself. Most lived in small houses on their master's property and were often given a small plot of land for a garden. Even after their emancipation in 1863, many slaves chose to remain and work for their former masters in order to pay for the necessities their master had once provided.

**THE TYPICAL LANDHOUSE**

Landhouses were usually built on high ground, to provide the owner with a vantage point from which to watch over his domain and to take maximum advantage of the breeze provided by the tradewinds. In the Banda Bao, the western side of the island, landhouses were built within sight of at least one other landhouse in order to form a communication network throughout the area. By signalling to each other from their roofs, either with flaming torches or mirrors, they could warn their neighbors of trouble or call for help.

Landhouses were built primarily of coral cement which was often mixed with rocks from the higher reaches of the island. Typically the design consisted of a central core with wings built on at least two sides and a gable above the center. Roofs were gabled or pitched in order to keep the sun from beating down on the house directly. Bedrooms were usually on the second floor, though it was not uncommon during a heatwave for the family to sleep in the open galleries on the ground floor, which were cooled by the constant tradewinds.

Most landhouses had a *broodbakoven*, a bread oven, in the garden. It would be lined with bricks, which retained the heat of the wood fire. Once the bricks were hot, the fire would be removed and the bread inserted for baking. The kitchen itself was located on the west side of the house so that odors would be carried off by the tradewinds. The same held true for the outhouse.

Whenever possible, estates were built over groundwater, with wells to provide water for plants and livestock. Rain, on the other hand, was the primary source of water for household use. It would be collected via a series of coral cement aqueducts running from the roof to a large cistern. During times of drought, water was purchased from "water plantations" built over large natural water tables.

## LANDHOUSES THROUGH THE YEARS

Though many landhouses have dates inscribed under their gables, they don't necessarily represent the date of construction. Owners sometimes selected a date much earlier than the actual one to make it seem as if they had inherited an antique of great historic value. To ascertain the age of a landhouse, you must look instead to the design and shape of the gable itself. Given the fragility of the building materials, chiefly coral cement, which soon crumbles without proper attention (mere abandonment is enough), many of the earliest landhouses have collapsed. In addition, many were burnt down during the slave revolt in 1795. Thankfully, several landhouses have been renovated or entirely rebuilt.

*The western tour of the island will take you past the Landhaus Ascención ( 641950).*

Curaçao's earliest landhouses were built during the later years of the 17th century and the early 18th century. With fluid lines and a triangle on top of a square motif, their gables resemble those that had been popular in Amsterdam a century earlier. Examples include **Landhaus Ascención**, one of the few landhouses remaining from the 17th century. It was built around 1672 and was restored in 1963. Today it is used as a recreation center for Dutch Marines stationed in the Antilles. It is open to the public on the first Sunday of every month, when there is an open house featuring folkloric music, handicrafts and refreshments.

*Landhuis Daniel is a delightful place to stop at the end of the western tour of the island. The terrace is open from 9 am to 6 pm daily, except Tuesday and Thursday ( 648400).*

Though the present landhouse was built in the 18th century, **Landhuis Daniel** goes back as far as 1634. It was never used for agriculture. Instead, given its central location, it served as a rest stop for travellers and their horses who were travelling from east to west. Today it is a guest house featuring a restaurant, dive center and souvenir shop. Fresh-brewed coffee, homemade pastries, Dutch pancakes, and snacks are served on the terrace. Dinner is by reservation only.

*Visitors are welcome Monday through Thursday from 9 am until noon and from 1 pm to 3 pm, as well as Friday mornings and the first Sunday of the month ( 64159).*

**Groot S. Martha** was built sometime before 1750 by Daniel Ellis who, as the story goes, was shipwrecked here on St. Daniel's Day. It was restored by the government in 1979 and is now used as a daycare center for the physically and mentally handicapped, who make handicrafts and souvenirs.

Otrobanda's **Landhuis Habai** dates back to the 17th century and is the only remaining landhouse in the Jewish Quarter that belonged to the early Sephardic settlers. Unique are its full second floor and cobblestone courtyard.

The more ornamental Baroque style, with its curlicues and fancifully carved gables, came into favor in Curaçao in the 18th century, a full century after its debut in Europe. Originally built in the 17th century, **Landhuis Savonet** in Christoffel Park was rebuilt in Baroque style after being destroyed by British invaders. A minaret-like pinnacle caps the fluid lines of its gable. Other fine examples include **Landhuis Jan Kok**, which dates back to the 18th century, and **Zeelandia**, a restored office building in Willemstad. Private tours of Landhuis Jan Kok are offered weekdays by appointment only ( 648087). It is open to the public on Sundays and offers a menu of Dutch-style pancakes, local cooking, and chilling ghost stories by the owner Jeanette.

*Weekdays from 9 am to noon and 2 pm to 4 pm; and Sundays from 10 am to 5 pm. Closed Saturdays. Call ahead for guided tour reservations ( 640244).*

The early years of the 19th century were marked by a return to simplicity with a small square atop the gable replacing the more fanciful Baroque designs. First built in 1700, **Plantation Knip** was the starting point of the slave uprising of 1795 led by Tula. The landhouse was destroyed completely and rebuilt in 1830 on a plan not unlike the original, although the gables are early 19th-century style. Landhouse Knip has been remodeled twice since then, first in the 1930's and again

in the 1980's. It is located not far from Knip Bay, home to two of the loveliest beaches on the island. The landhouse is open to the public and frequently hosts handicraft fairs.

*Daytime hours are Monday through Friday, 9:15 am-12:15 pm and 3 pm-6 pm. Happy Hour is from 5 pm to 7 pm.*

**Landhuis Chobolobo** dates back to the 1800's. It was acquired by the Senior Family in 1948 and flourished as an elegant supper club for several years. Now it is home to the Curaçao Liqueur Distillery, which is open to the public from 8 am to noon and 1 pm to 5 pm. Tasting is included in the free visit ( 378459).

In the 18th century **Landhuis Brievengat** was a prosperous cattle ranch with a domain of 1,200 acres. Unfortunately, it was devastated by the hurricane of 1877 and fell into ruin, despite its abundant ground water. In the early years of the 20th century it was sold to the Shell Oil Company for one gilder. Finally in 1952 it was restored by the Ukrainian architect Serge Alexeenko. Nowadays it is a popular cultural and social center. By day it hosts antique and craft fair exhibits. Evenings are quite busy, with happy hours Wednesday and Friday, featuring Rijstaffel, followed by live dance music on the terrace Friday evenings from 9 pm onwards. Dance lessons are offered Thursday evenings at 8:30, and there's another happy hour on Sunday from 5 pm to 7 pm with live music. Plus there is a folkloric show on the last Sunday of the month. Though lovely during the day, Brievengat is especially beautiful at night.

The late 19th century marked an extreme departure from earlier *landhuis* styles, with the elimination of the decorative gable top. Many of the landhouses on the eastern side of the island are in this style, as is **Landhuis Papaya.** It is open to the public and features a display of early photographs. Hours are from 10 am to 6 pm weekdays, and weekends until 9 pm. There's a barbecue with mariachi music on Sundays *( 695850).*

Private ownership of landhouses began to decline at the beginning of the 20th century. Many of the descendants of the former slaves who had remained on the plantations went to work for the newly opened Shell Refinery. Their source of labor gone, much of the land went uncultivated and the landhouses became nothing more than an economic burden to their owners. While some were sold to the government for public use, many were simply abandoned.

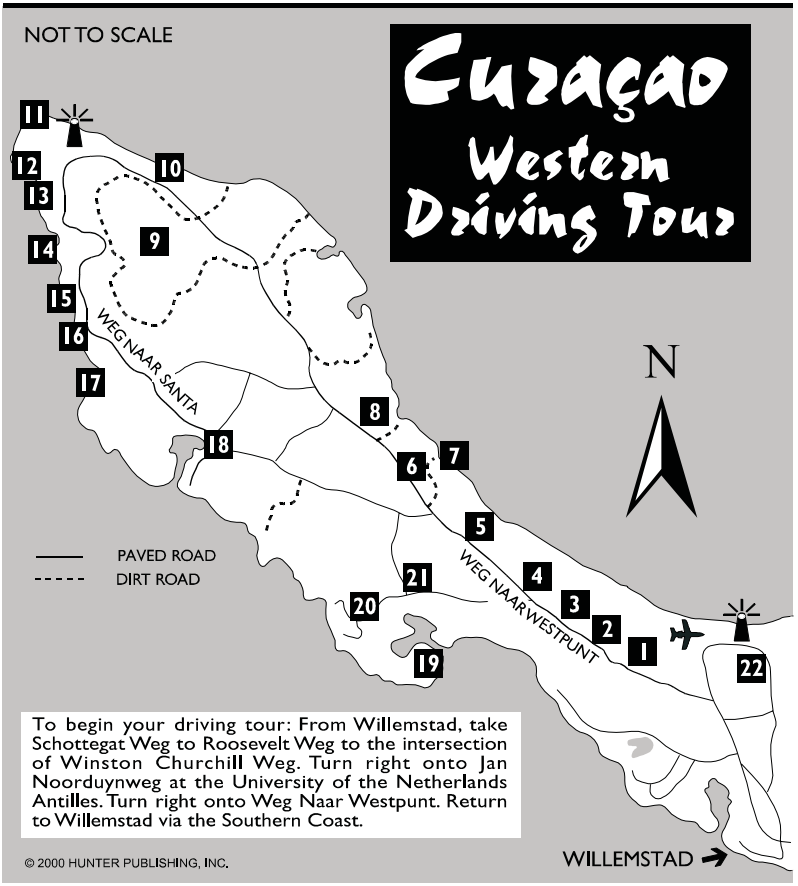
In recent years, Curaçao's landhouses have been rediscovered, both for the important role they played in the island's history as well as for their charm. Many are enjoying second lives as museums, art galleries, restaurants, hotels and cultural centers. The Monument Bureau has plans for others, while some still serve as private residences.

*In order to better plan your day, review the sections on beaches and landhouses before setting out.*

## Island Tours

*The Banda Bao is Curaçao's better half.*

### Banda Bou (Western Tour)


NOT TO SCALE
Curaçao
Western
Driving Tour
N
WEG NAAR SANTA
WEG NAAR WESTPUNT
PAVED ROAD
DIRT ROAD
To begin your driving tour: From Willemstad, take Schottegat Weg to Roosevelt Weg to the intersection of Winston Churchill Weg. Turn right onto Jan Noorduynweg at the University of the Netherlands Antilles. Turn right onto Weg Naar Westpunt. Return to Willemstad via the Southern Coast.
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WILLEMSTAD

1. Landhuis Papaya
2. Grote Berg
3. Kleine Berg
4. Landhuis Daniel
5. Tera Cora
6. Pos di San Pedro
7. Boca San Pedro
8. Landhuis Ascensión
9. Christoffel National Park and Christoffelberg
10. Boca Tabla
11. Watamula (western point of the island)
12. Playa Kalki
13. Westpuntbaai
14. Knipbaai (beautiful beaches)
15. Playa Jeremi
16. Playa Lagún
17. Boca Santa Cruz
18. Soto / Groot Landhuis Santa Marta
19. Saliña Santa Marie (flamingos)
20. Willibrordus (village) and Cathedral of St. William Brothers
21. Landhuis Jan Kok (famous plantation house)
22. Hato Caves

The western side of the island, or the *Banda Bou* as it is called by the locals, is the most scenic part of the island. Much of the landscape is unspoiled and many of Curaçao's loveliest and most secluded beaches are along the southwest coast. In fact, our tour will take you past several of them as well as many of Curaçao's historic plantation houses.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

The breathtaking views from atop Christoffelberg.

The spray of waves crashing into the Viewpoint Cave at Boca Tabla.

Snorkeling at Playa Lagún.

Postcard perfect vistas of Santa Martha Baai.

**GETTING READY**

The drive that follows can be completed in one day, but that won't leave you much time for hiking in Christoffel Park or hanging out at the beach, not to mention snorkeling and diving. Keeping that in mind, read through the tour and plan your itinerary according to your own interests.

Water buffs should pack their snorkel and or dive gear, including dive booties. Don't forget good walking shoes if you plan on climbing Mt. Christoffel or hiking in the park. Regardless of your plans, bring sunscreen, a hat and water. Stop for lunch at Jaanchie's Restaurant in Watamula, or pack a picnic.

**To leave Willemstad**, head northwest on the Schottegat Weg, the beltway around

Willemstad and the Schottegat. At the intersection by the police station, turn west onto Roosevelt Weg and follow it until you reach the Winston Churchill Weg intersection, where you should make a right hand turn followed by a quick left onto Jan Noorduynweg. You'll pass the **University of the Netherlands Antilles** on the left. Degrees are offered in law, industrial engineering and public administration. Students interested in other fields study abroad, usually in the Netherlands, Puerto Rico or the United States.

*Landhuis Papaya is often rented out for private parties.*

At the next traffic light turn right onto the **Weg Naar Westpunt**, the Road to Westpunt, and you'll be on your way. Among the landmarks you'll pass is the gaily painted **Landhuis Papaya**. The smallest of the landhouses on Curaçao, it was once a popular "resting point" for men travelling between Willemstad and the other plantations. After passing Landhuis Papaya, you'll climb 330 feet to the top of **Grote Berg** (Big Mountain) and then **Kleine Berg** (Small Mountain). From either of the two peaks you can see the Christoffelberg which, at 1,230 feet, is Curaçao's highest mountain. This is the narrowest part of the island.

A little farther down the road on the left is a small chapel-like building that was built by the artist/physician Chris Engels for his wife Lucille, a talented painter. One day, as Lucille was painting, Engels thought the canvas she was painting was too small. He promised her a wall to paint on and, in the end, wound

up building a house to go with it. In addition to Lucille's mural, sculptures by the Dutch artist Charles Eyack are also here. If you'd like to have a look, stop by the house across the road and request the key.

Just beyond the road to San Willibrordo you'll pass **Landhuis Daniel** and then a cluster of homes in an area known as **Tera Cora**, Red Earth, due to the red color of the soil. The soil in this area is quite fertile and you'll note that the vegetation growing along the roadside is greener and more dense than in other areas of the island. If you were to follow the road next to the house with the number TC24A painted on its wall, you would arrive at a beautiful view of the saltpans, the Landhuis Jan Kok, and the Church of Willibrordo just about a mile later. We'll pass through this area later on in the tour. On the left side of the road you may be able to spot the remains of a stone wall. This is one of the walls dating back to colonial days and known as "slave walls." When there was no other work to be done, the slaves would be ordered to build walls out of coral rocks rather than be idle.

**SCENIC DETOUR:**
**THE ROAD TO SAN PEDRO**

Take a right turn down the road marked *San Pedro 1.6*. You'll drive past a fertile area known as **Pos di San Pedro**, San Pedro Well, as well as a field of cactus. Since you are driving across a high plateau, you'll have a wonderful view of the Caribbean. On a clear day you can even see Bonaire. Bear right at the bottom of the plateau and you'll come out

*You're driving along the northern coast of the island.*

at **Boca San Pedro**, or *Houtjes Baai*, as it is called by the islanders, due to the large amounts of driftwood that turn up on its shores. Also located at the end of the road is **Kodela's Wind Farm**, a series of windmills along the coast, and the San Petro Plantation, a small farm. After enjoying the views, turn around and head back to the main road.

*The museum is open Tuesday through Friday from 9 am to 4 pm and weekends from 9 am to 5 pm. There is a small admission fee. Closed Monday.*

Just after returning to the main road you'll pass a group of divi-divi trees. The **Landhuis Ascensión** is just down the road, followed by the **Kas di Palu di Maishi.** This house was built by a former slave over a hundred years ago and is now home to a small museum dedicated to country life. A museum piece itself, it has been maintained in the traditional style with a straw roof and walls made of branches and rocks covered with a mixture of clay and manure. Small farm animals wander about freely, and there is an outdoor restaurant in the back serving typical foods, primarily stews.

*The park is open from 8 am to 4 pm, Monday through Saturday and Sundays from 6 am to 3 pm. Admission to the park and museum is $5 U.S. Guides can be hired for both walking and driving tours. Arrangements should be made in advance (  640363).*

This part of Curaçao is fairly hilly and often densely forested, with cactus and tall manzanilla trees dominating the landscape. After passing through the village of Barber, the largest settlement on the western side of the island and best known for its historic cemetery, you'll see Christoffelberg. Shortly thereafter you'll come to the **Landhuis Savonet** and the entrance to the Christoffel National Park.

The park, which covers an area of 5,000 acres, was founded in 1978 on land owned by three former plantations – Savonet, Zorgvliet, and

Zevenbergen – and is managed by STINAPA, the Netherlands Antilles National Parks Foundation. Park highlights include a natural history museum in the Landhuis, which houses a collection of archaeological artifacts dating back to 2,000 B.C., Indian cave drawings on the north coast, a nature reserve and, of course, Christoffelberg. If you're planning on climbing Christoffelberg, you should get to the park in the early morning hours before the sun gets too strong.

*Sunrise atop Christoffelberg is spectacular.*

**EXPLORING CHRISTOFFEL NATIONAL PARK**

The park can be explored by a combination of driving and hiking. The following overview should get you on your way. Maps are available at the entrance. If you can manage it, sunrise is a fabulous time to tour the park and climb Christoffelberg.

**The Savonet Route** (5½ miles, 45 minutes). Starting at the Landhuis Savonet, the Blue Route, as it is also called, takes you out to the north coast, where you can explore the Indian drawings and caves in the cliffs there.

The **Savonet Hiking Trail** (90 minutes) travels through a mahogany forest past wells, dams and a saltpan to the limestone terraces of Boca Grandi on the north coast.

**The Zvorgvlied Route** (driving only, 7.6 miles/90 minutes), also called the Green Route, heads west from Landhuis Savonet past the ruins of the **Landhuis Zvorgvlied**. If you stop to study the ruins, you will see that

it was constructed using a combination of coral from the coast as well as rocks from the island's higher elevations. A path to the left of the ruins leads to the **Slave Pillar**. Traditionally, slaves would be chained to a pillar such as this one as a punishment. However, the absence of the iron links used to chain the slaves to the pillar indicates that it may have been used as a beacon for smugglers.

As the route continues onward past **Boca Tabla** and **Landhuis Knip**, you'll enjoy panoramic views of the coast and Christoffelberg. A little beyond the Landhuis, it links up with the hiking trail to Christoffelberg, which starts at Landhuis Savonet. There is a parking area here where you can leave your car. A shortcut from the Zvorgvlied ruins leads directly to the trail.

The hike up the mountain and back should take you about two hours (three if you start at Landhuis Savonet) and can be quite challenging, especially the last few minutes, when you literally have to climb up the steepest part of the hill. Upon reaching the top you'll be rewarded with spectacular views of the island and the Caribbean, even Bonaire on a clear day.

Returning to the road, you'll come to the **Piedra de Monton**, the *Pile of Rocks* at the intersection with the **Zevenbergen Route** (the Yellow Route). The slaves of the Caribbean believed that by refraining from eating salt, one would be able to fly back to Africa.

The slaves of Curaçao believed that this was the launching pad for that flight.

**The Zevenbergen Route** (seven miles, 75 minutes driving, plus walking time). The Yellow Route is the most beautiful of the driving routes. You'll drive through rolling hills with wild orchids and *banana shimaron* growing along the roadside. The first highlight of this tour is the panoramic view of Santa Martha Baai. A little further on you'll reach the hiking trail to **Seru Bientu**, Wind Mountain**,** so named because it is one of the windiest spots on the entire island**.** It's a short hike to the top. Looking west, you'll see Landhuis Knip and the village of Westpunt in the distance. The route continues past abandoned manganese mines, eventually rejoining the Green Route, which will take you back to the entrance of the park.

*The coral terrace here is quite jagged. Sturdy footwear is recommended.*

Leave the park and continue on towards the western tip of the island. You'll soon come to the **Parke Nacionale Shete Boca.** Countless years of violent battering by the rough seas of the north coast have formed these seven inlets, the most impressive and best known of which is **Boca Tabla.** Follow the path to **Viewpoint Cave**. You'll climb down to a low grotto with a seemingly quiet pool. Watch out! According to local legend, when a beautiful woman enters the grotto, the sea gets excited. Though perfectly dry when we climbed down into the cave, we were sopping wet when we left.

*Stop for lunch at Jaanchie's Restaurant.*

Back on the road, you'll drive past the other six *bocas* and then follow the curve of the island at **Watamula** to the southern coast. Several of our recommended beaches are in this area including **Playa Kalki**, **Westpuntbaai**, **Knipbaai**, **Playa Jeremi**, **Playa Lagún** and **Boca Santa Cruz**.

Just beyond Santa Cruz, you'll come to the village of Soto where you can visit the **Groot Landhuis Santa Marta**. Soto is also the starting point for one of Curaçao's loveliest drives, the road to the **Coral Cliff Resort and Casino**. Well worth a detour, it offers panoramic views of the village of Santa Martha and Santa Marthabaai set against a background of hills dominated by Christoffelberg. You'll also pass the **Saliña Santa Marie**, a popular feeding ground for flamingos. The beach at the Coral Cliff Resort is open to the public, though you will have to pay an admission fee at the reception desk. **Wet Suit City**, a popular snorkeling and dive site, is located in front of the resort.

Return to Soto via the same road and then continue east on the main road. About four miles outside Soto you'll arrive at the turn-off for **Playa and Landhuis Cas Abao**. Shortly thereafter, you'll come to a fork in the road. Bear right towards the village of **Willibrordus**, best known for its church, the **Cathedral of St. William Brothers**, which has been beautifully restored.

*Jeanette is a terrific ghost story teller.*

Heading back towards Willemstad, you'll come to the **Landhuis Jan Kok.** It dates

back to 1650 and, according to the locals, is haunted by its original owner, the infamous Jan Kok, who had a well-deserved reputation for cruelty. Its current owner, Jeanette, is the first person to live in the house for more than 10 years. Belief in Jan Kok's ghost is so strong that she can go out, leaving the doors unlocked, without a care. Jeanette maintains the house in its original colonial style and offers guided tours by appointment ( 648087). Be sure to walk out to the terrace, which overlooks the Saliña Santa Marie.

If time allows, stop at the **Hato Caves** before returning to Willemstad. The last tour is at 4 pm.

**HATO CAVES**
*F.D. Roosevelt Weg (across from the Hotel Holland) 680379*
*Tuesday-Sunday, 10 am-5 pm*
*Guided tours every hour, last tour 4 pm*
*Admission: $4 U.S. adults; $3 children*
Nearly 200 million years ago, predating the formation of Curaçao and even the Caribbean basin by more than 100 million years, pounding waves and tidal movements were gradually wearing down a portion of a large underwater landmass. Another 100 million years later, volcanic eruptions, underwater earthquakes and other massive shifts would cause that mass to break apart, forming the two Americas and the Caribbean basin. Curaçao too would rise out of the sea, with the caves formed by the millions of years of pounding seas still intact below the plateaus or *mesetas* of the north coast.

Fossilized sea creatures, corals, scallops and other crustaceans embedded in the walls and ceilings of the Hato Caves lend credence to the theory of the caves' underwater birth. Though no longer pounded by waves, the caves are still in a slow process of formation, with stalagmites and stalactites still growing at a rate of one centimeter (just over a third of an inch) per century. As you may remember from your science classes, stalactites and stalagmites are formed by tiny deposits of calcium carbonate left by the beads of water that leech out of the limestone. If untouched, the stalactites and stalagmites will gradually join in the center forming a thin pillar that will slowly thicken with the passage of time.

*It's a 49-step climb to the caves. The entrance offers a fantastic view of the north coast.*

Evidence suggests that the caves may have been used for religious rituals by the Caquetío Indians in the 16th century. Nor are modern-day tourists the first to visit the caves. Dutch plantation owners often offered their guests tours of the caves, conducted by their slaves.

Nowadays, tours are led by professional guides who offer a running commentary on the caves' formation, along with delightful anecdotes. You'll cover much of the caves' 52,000 square feet (over an acre), with their freshwater pools, waterfalls and interesting formations, including the remarkable Virgin Mary and the Sleeping Giant. Clever lighting adds to the enchantment.

In addition to the underground tour, the path just outside the entrance to the cave leads to

Indian petroglyphs, which were created by the Caquetíos about 1,500 years ago. They are among the only Caquetío drawings in the Caribbean outside their homeland along the Orinoco River in Venezuela. Discovered by an amateur geologist in 1950, they have since attracted the attention of the Smithsonian Institution. Also of interest is the large cage at the base of the staircase leading to the caves. Resident within are iguanas of all shapes and sizes, toucans, parrots and turtles from Venezuela, and Surinam parrots from the Amazon Basin.

The Caves are run by a private company from Tennessee under the watchful supervision of STINAPA. A souvenir shop and snackbar serving local fare are at the entrance.

## Banda Riba (Eastern Tour)

More a scenic drive than anything else, this tour can easily be completed in a couple of hours. You may want to stop at the Curaçao Liqueur Distillery and Landhuis Chobolobo or spend the afternoon at Barbara Beach, our final destination.

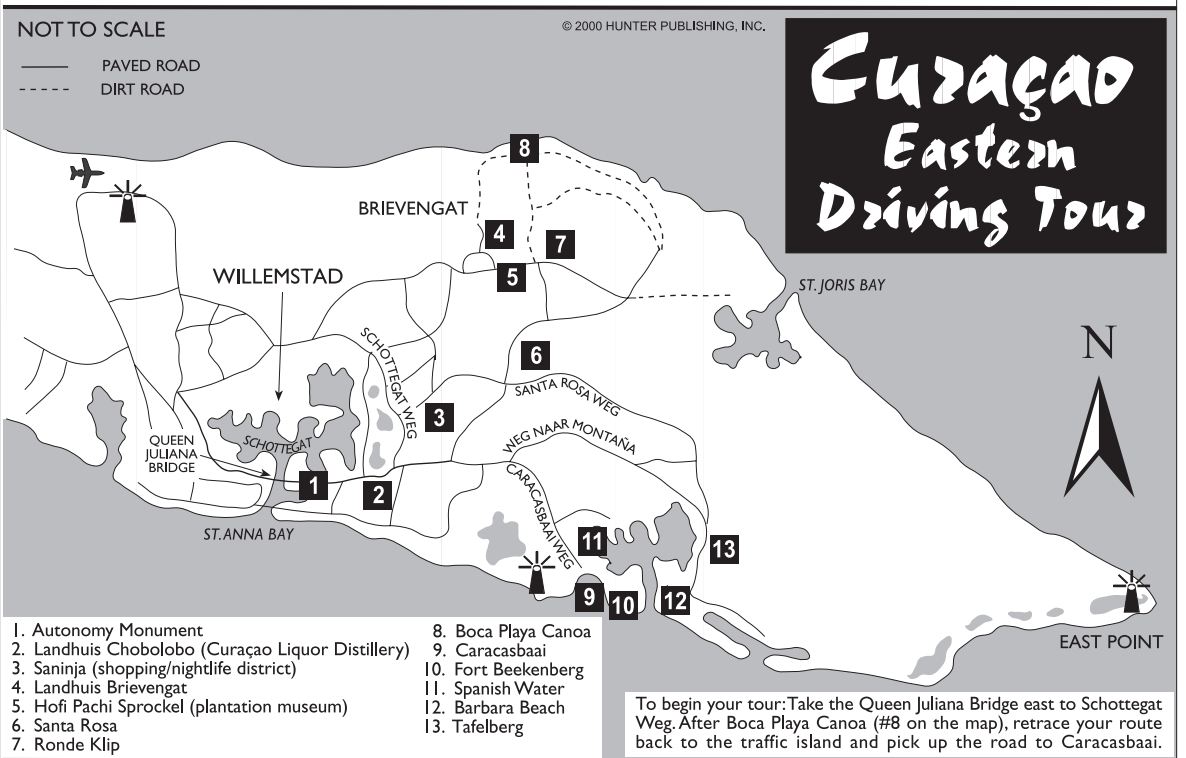
**HIGHLIGHTS**

Lunch at Playa Perla Canoa.

Samples at Landhuis Chobolobo.

Watching the yachts go by at Barbara Beach.

Cross the **Queen Juliana Bridge**, heading east out of Willemstad on **Schottegat Weg**, popularly known as the **Ring**. Six-tenths of a


NOT TO SCALE
PAVED ROAD
DIRT ROAD
© 2000 HUNTER PUBLISHING, INC.
Curaçao
Eastern
Driving Tour
BRIEVENGAT
WILLEMSTAD
ST. JORIS BAY
SCHOTTEGAT WEG
SANTA ROSA WEG
WEG NAAR MONTAÑA
CARACASBAAI WEG
QUEEN JULIANA BRIDGE
SCHOTTEGAT
ST. ANNA BAY
EAST POINT
N
1. Autonomy Monument
2. Landhuis Chobolobo (Curaçao Liquor Distillery)
3. Saninja (shopping/nightlife district)
4. Landhuis Brievengat
5. Hofi Pachi Sprockel (plantation museum)
6. Santa Rosa
7. Ronde Klip
8. Boca Playa Canoa
9. Caracasbaai
10. Fort Beekenberg
11. Spanish Water
12. Barbara Beach
13. Tafelberg
To begin your tour: Take the Queen Juliana Bridge east to Schottegat Weg. After Boca Playa Canoa (#8 on the map), retrace your route back to the traffic island and pick up the road to Caracasbaai.

mile beyond the bridge you'll pass the **Autonomy Monument**. It was dedicated in 1955 to coincide with the eradication of the colonial status of the Netherlands Antilles. The six birds represent the six Antilles. The inscription reads: "Trusting in our own strength, but ready to support each other."

*The Curaçao Liqueur Distillery is open weekdays from 8 am to 12 pm and from 1 pm to 5 pm for tours and tastings.*

Shortly after passing the Autonomy Monument, you'll come to the **Landhuis Chobolobo**, the original and present home of the **Curaçao Liqueur Distillery**, located just at the border of **Salinja**, Curaçao's newest shopping district and also home to many of the island's popular nightclubs.

Not quite two miles beyond the distillery you'll come to a major intersection where there should be a sign for **Landhuis Brievengat**. Follow the signs past the **Sentro Deportivo Korsou** until you come to the T-intersection where you should turn right. You'll soon come upon three windmills, the landmark for the **Hofi Pachi Sprockel**, a former plantation that now features an outdoor display of artifacts and dwellings dating back to the times of slavery. If you'd like to visit, you'll need to make an appointment ahead of time ( 369957).

*If you'd like to visit the Landhuis, which is described above, turn left at the T.*

Follow the signs to **Santa Rosa** and then, upon reaching Santa Rosa, watch for the sign to **Ronde Klip** and follow it. To your left you'll see two hills. The higher of the two is *Ronde Klip* or Round Cliff. Atop the other, which is accessible by car, is the transmitter for Radio Korsou. To reach the top, take the first road that runs in front of the hill and

*See the description in the dining section.*

then the paved road to the left. From here you'll have a sweeping view of Schottegat Harbor as well as the eastern side of the island.

Get back on the main road, and continue until you reach the turn-off to **Boca Playa Canoa**, which will be on your right. You'll drive through an arid landscape of cactus and low vegetation to the island's rugged north coast. Upon reaching the coast, you'll come to the **Natural Bridge.** Standing alongside this natural limestone formation should give you an idea of the force with which the surf pounds the northern coast, as compared to the more tranquil waters of the southern coast.

Drive along the coast to **Boca Playa Canoa**, the only fishing inlet on the northern coast and a popular hang out for surfers. Thanks to a limestone wall that serves as a breakwater, this is the only spot on the north coast where it is possible to sail a small boat into land. However, it requires a great deal of skill and is only attempted by experienced fishermen. According to popular legend, pirates used to land here and hide their treasure in a hollow tree outside the Landhuis Brievengat.

A popular stop for lunch, or at least a drink, is the **Playa Perla Canoa**, an outdoor restaurant featuring great scenery, fresh, fresh fish and local cuisine. The restaurant has been built into the limestone wall and is right at the water's edge – so close that if you're lucky

enough to get an oceanside table, you may want to take off your shoes, just in case.

Once you're ready to head out to the southern coast, retrace your steps back to Salinja and the traffic island, where you should pick up the road to **Caracasbaai.** Once the site of the Shell Oil Terminal, the tanks and other vestiges are being dismantled, and plans are in the works to turn this into a tourist area, with facilities that may include a hotel. **Towboat**, a popular dive and snorkel site, is located here and the area already draws a crowd on the weekends. Also here are the remains of **Fort Beekenberg**, with its battle tower still intact, and the **Fishermen's Wharf** and **Pisces Bar and Restaurant**. Also on the bay is a fishermen's harbor and marina, where a busy market is held in the mornings and evenings after the fishing boats come in. Many local restaurants purchase their fish here.

On the northern side of Caracas Bay is **Spanish Water.** With its only entrance hidden from sight, during the colonial period this large inner harbor was a favorite hiding place for those in the know. No longer a secret, this is Curaçao's most exclusive residential area, home not only to the island's wealthiest residents, but to four yacht clubs as well.

*There is a bus to the top of the Tafelberg on Tuesdays and Fridays at 2 pm.*

On the eastern side of Spanish Water is **Barbara Beach**. This white sandy beach is the loveliest on the Banda Riba and a delightful vantage point from which to watch the yachts and sailboats as they leave the harbor and head for the open sea. The **Landhuis**

**Santa Barbara** is nearby. Also in view is the **Tafelberg** or table mountain. Once a phosphate mine, now it is home to the only solar powered radio transmitter in the world. From the top you have a panoramic view of the island; on a clear day you can see Bonaire and even Venezuela.

## Shopping

Commerce is nothing new to Curaçao. Long before the first Europeans arrived, the Caiquetio Indians from Northwestern Venezuela had settled on the island and were trading with the mainland from dugout canoes. Centuries later, the Dutch, French and English would fight for control, recognizing the strategic value of Curaçao's protected harbor and prime location on the trading routes between Europe and South America. The Dutch eventually won out, but that hasn't prevented fine French perfumes and cosmetics and English porcelain from penetrating the market, along with other goods from around the world.

Modern day Curaçao is the shopping mecca of the Caribbean. Venezuelans used to flock here to shop during the oil boom years in the 1970's when their pocketbooks were full and the bolívar was strong. Its Free Zone, the largest in the Caribbean, is patronized by retailers from throughout the region, who come to stock up on goods from all over the world. Goods purchased in the Free Zone must be shipped directly to your home or transferred to your ship or flight. You can pick them up

when you arrive home. Some goods can only be purchased in bulk. But, as far as we're concerned, the real shopping is in Willemstad, where you'll find a wonderful selection of European clothing, Indonesian crafts and jewelry, French perfumes, Japanese electronics, Irish crystal, English china, pre-Colombian style jewelry, fine Italian and South American leathers, Chinese embroidered linen tablecloths, Indonesian batik clothing and accessories, Austrian crystal (Swarovski), Swiss watches... the list goes on and on.

*Breedestraat means Broadway in Dutch.*

Starting at the Queen Emma Bridge, **Breedestraat**, the main shopping street in Punda, is lined with international shops featuring European perfumes and cosmetics, fine linens hand embroidered in China and Portugal, Dutch Delft porcelain, Bohemian cut crystal, Swiss watches, jewelry, electronics, and designer clothing. You'll find similar values on the pedestrian promenades, **Heerenstraat** and **Madurostraat**. Handicrafts and Haitian woodcarvings are displayed at the end of Heerenstraat on the Plaza Jo Jo Correa. From there you can turn onto Madurostraat, with its shops offering affordably priced designer apparel, sportswear and shoes.

Before crossing the floating bridge to Otrobanda, browse through the designer boutiques in the **Waterfort Arches**. They'll contrast sharply with the shops on **Breedestraat in Otrobanda**. The Orchard Street of Willemstad, Otrobanda is known for

bargains, including imported fabrics and lace from Europe and the Far East.

No matter where you go, prices may be as much as 30% below what you would pay for the same or similar items at home and there's no sales tax. Credit cards, U.S. dollars and Dutch guilders are accepted almost anywhere. Payment in cash may sometimes result in a discount. No matter where you shop, the sales people are courteous and attentive. You'll be amazed at how effortlessly they switch between English, Spanish, Dutch and Papiamentu, sometimes in the same conversation.

Since the downtown shopping district is small, it is possible to see all of it at a leisurely pace in a morning. However, if you're serious about shopping and your time on the island is limited, the following descriptions should be of some help.

### Sportswear & Cosmetics

**PENHA & SONS**
Breedestraat, Punda
Located at the corner of Breedestraat and Heerenstraat alongside the Queen Emma Bridge, Penha & Sons is nearly impossible to miss. Not only is the name prominently displayed along the facade of the building, so is the date of construction, 1708, making this the oldest building in Willemstad. Penha & Sons is the exclusive distributor of several lines of fine cosmetics and perfumes including Estee Lauder, Elizabeth Arden,

Biotherm, Lancaster, Shiseido, Boucheron, Escada and Lalique.

Casual apparel by Liz Clairborne, Carole Little and Jones New York is featured in the Ladies Boutique. Sportswear by Tommy Hilfiger, Nautica, Botany 500, Ralph Lauren and Givenchy are upstairs in the Men's Boutique along with French and Italian ties and Sperry Topsider deckshoes. Penha & Sons' selection of Hummel figurines, Blue Delft porcelain, souvenirs and t-shirts make fine gifts.

**LA CASA AMARILLA**
**(THE YELLOW HOUSE)**
*Breedestraat 46*
*The Sonesta Beach Hotel*
This fine perfumerie dates back to 1887. Of course, the cosmetics and perfumes are totally contemporary. They carry fragrances by Elizabeth Arden, Cartier, Dior, Guerlein, Givenchy, and Nina Ricci, and cosmetics by Stendhal, Swisscare & Beaute, Lancaster and Svelte by Dior, along with a large selection of liquors and gift items.

*Prices are unbelievable. We bought four pairs of Bally shoes during our last visit.*

**LITTLE HOLLAND**
*Gomez Plein 6*
*Breedestraat 37*
Little Holland features Curaçao's largest selection of hand-embroidered linen tablecloths and place mats, along with Tommy Hilfiger and Nautica sportswear, Gotcha Beachwear, and Polo fashions. You'll also find terrific buys on Bally and Clark's men's and women's shoes. The Breedestraat branch has a special acclimatized cedar cigar room.

**NEW AMSTERDAM STORE**
*Gomezplein & Breedestraat*
The New Amsterdam has been offering shoppers bargain prices since 1925. You'll find top quality hand-embroidered tablecloths, doilies and placemats, Nao (by Lladro) and Delft porcelain, and the most complete selection of Hummel figurines on the island. 14 kt.and 18 kt. gold jewelry is 20% off. Women can choose among fashions by Escada, Gotex, Steilman, Esprit, and Nicole Miller, and accessorize with Italian leather shoes, bags and belts by Isanti. Men's sportswear is by Carven, Tom Taylor, Nike and Reebok.

**LA PERLA BOUTIQUE**
*Gomezplein*
This lovely boutique, a relatively new addition to Willemstad's downtown shops, features its own line of prêt-à-porter fashions – Ritmo di Perla – along with an exclusive selection of fine lingerie and swimwear.

## Watches & Jewelry

**LITTLE SWITZERLAND**
*Breedestraat 44*
If a Rolex has been on your wish list for years, this may be the time to make that wish come true. Little Switzerland carries the finest Swiss watches, 14 kt. and 18 kt. gemstone and diamond jewelry and a lovely selection of china, crystal figurines including Swarovski, leather goods and accessories. Prices are among the best in the Caribbean.

**GANDELMAN JEWELERS**
*Breedestraat 35,*

*Sonesta Beach Hotel*
An old-timer in Curaçao, Gandelman Jewelers are best known for their exclusive selection of handcrafted gold jewelry set with diamonds and colored gemstones, including emeralds, rubies and sapphires. They also have one of the largest selections of timepieces by Cartier, Piaget, Ebel, Movado, Tag-Heur and other well-known watchmakers. Crystal by Lalique, Baccarat, Daum and Swarovski, leather goods by Prima Classe and Mont Blanc writing instruments round out the selection.

**KYRA**
*Cozy Point, Suite B*
*Corrieweg*
Kyra features exquisitely reproduced pre-Colombian jewelry in pewter and 24kt. gold. They also have a collection of beautiful 18kt. gold jewelry from Germany, Italy and South America, which is set with diamonds and precious and semi-precious gemstones, as well as lovely gift items in silver, crystal and fine porcelain.

## Electronics

**BOOLCHAND'S**
*Breedestraat at Heerenstraat*
Boolchand's offers a hard-to-beat selection of photographic and electronic equipment, including cameras by Nikon, Minolta, Olympus and Pentax, and electronics by Alpine, Bose, Braun, Hitachi, JVC, Kenwood, Nintendo, Sony and TDK. Citizen and Seiko watches, Ray Ban sunglasses and Swarovski crystal are also sold there.

## Shoes & Leather Goods

**EXOTIQUE PLAZA**
*Waterfort Arches*
You'll find a great selection of high quality leather goods and gifts, such as attaché cases, briefcases, handbags, wallets, shoes and more. Additional locations are in the airport and the International Trade Center.

**ECCOLET**
*Breedestraat 39*
Made in Denmark, these trendy shoes appeal to the young at heart. They are designed to provide maximum comfort using soft, flexible materials for a perfect fit.

**ARAWAK CRAFTS**
*Cruise Ship Terminal, Otrobanda*
Works by local potters are featured at this combination workshop and showroom where you'll find both mass produced and one-of-a-kind pieces by local artisans. On display in the showroom are miniature *landhuisen*, porcelain models of the famous Handelskade, ceramic windchimes and countless other gift ideas. A walkway around the workshop lets you observe the artisans at work. Placards describe each phase of the process and identify the artisans.

*Shop here if you're planning a picnic or doing your own cooking. Brush up on your Spanish and be ready to bargain.*

**FLOATING MARKET**
Not to be missed, Willemstad's colorful Floating Market is reminiscent of those simpler times before Price Clubs and Super Stores. Located at the end of the Handelskade furthest from the Queen Emma Bridge, small fishing boats from Venezuela are lined up be-

neath a sea of colorful sailcloth canopies. Though many used to make the trip from Venezuela every day, nowadays vendors set up housekeeping on their boat and remain on Curaçao for two to three months, selling fresh tropical fruits and vegetables, fish, Caribbean spices and assorted odds and ends. Their mangoes, papayas, and other fresh fruits and vegetables are shipped in aboard a larger boat from Venezuela in the wee hours of the morning. For a real slice of life, get here in the morning when the local housewives are buying for their family. Nearby on the Plaza Jo Jo Correa there is often a small artisans' market featuring local crafts.

## Shopping Centers

The shopping center is a relatively new arrival on Curaçao. Most are located in Salinja and cater to well-heeled Curaçaoans.

**The Douglas Shopping Gallery** features a full-service salon and upscale boutiques. **Salinja Galleries** are comprised of three large buildings painted in island colors of yellow, coral and green, which are home to clothing and gift boutiques, restaurants selling high quality Dutch and German clothing and pre-Colombian jewelry. The **Promenade Shopping Center** features unique boutiques, while the **Bloempot Shopping Center,** located on an 18th-century estate, is a charming complex with a bank, restaurants. and boutiques. The **Landhuis Zuikertuintje**, which means sugar garden

in Dutch, is a modern supermarket selling European and North American goods. It has a snack bar in the back with a patio. Finally, the **'77 Shopping Center**, or **Siete Siete** and the **Esperamos Shopping Center** across the street, offer a wide variety of shops, including clothing stores, book stores, sporting goods shops and stationers.

## The Casinos

The casinos are another of Curaçao's most popular attractions. Most larger hotels have one, as do several of the smaller ones, including the out-of-the-way Coral Cliffs Resort. Many have just been expanded or renovated. Though the slots dominate, Caribbean stud poker, black jack, roulette and craps are also popular. The elegant **Emerald Casino** at the Sonesta Hotel is one of the few casinos on the island to offer baccarat. There are wall-to-wall slots in the popular **Princess Beach Casino**, which even has one large room entirely devoted to those one arm bandits. There's no lack of gaming tables either. You'll also find plenty to tempt you at any of the following:

Curaçao Caribbean Resort & Casino

Holiday Beach Hotel & Casino

Otrobanda Hotel & Casino

Princess Beach Resort & Casino

Sonesta Beach Hotel & Casino

Van der Valk Plaza Hotel & Casino

Most casinos open around midday, though the slots may open earlier, and don't close un-

til 4 am. Appropriate attire is required, though you should be able to get away with shorts and t-shirts during the day.

## After Dark

Exhausted after a full-day of shopping, snorkeling, sightseeing, golf, tennis and diving? Take a nap! Then after a quick shower, change and put your dancing shoes on, 'cause Curaçao is an island that knows how to party. There's no such thing as early to bed here. Not when you've got casinos, nightclubs and discos galore, and romantic outdoor cafés on the shores of the Caribbean.

How to construct the ideal Curaçao night? Start off with a **Sunset Happy Hour**. Rare is the hotel or restaurant that doesn't honor this island tradition with discounted drinks, snacks and maybe even live music. Hotel happy hours are usually outside by the pool, a great way to meet other guests. If you're in town at sunset, you're likely to find yourself mingling with the local business crowd. Among our favorite in-town sunset "vantage points" are the outdoor bars at the **Waterfort Arches, Bistro Le Clochard's Harbour Terrace**, and the poolside terrace at the **Van der Valk Plaza Hotel**, which features live music from 6 to 8 pm. A Sunset Sail is another delightful option. Remember, reservations should be made that morning.

For live jazz, don't miss the Thursday Night Happy Hour at the **Avila Beach Hotel's Blues Bar**. The Sunday Beach Party at the

*Of course, divers should forgo the rum punch at Sunset Happy Hour that evening. Common sense and safety dictate that divers planning to go on a night dive not drink alcoholic beverages beforehand.*

**Mambo Beach Bar** continues well past sunset with live music provided by one of Curaçao's hottest bands, the **Mambo Kings**. For a taste of Indonesia, head to **Landhuis Brievengat**. On Wednesdays and Fridays from 5 to 7 pm it hosts a happy hour featuring an Indonesian Rice Table or Rijsttafel. Live music is featured at the Landhuis' Sunday Happy Hour from 6 to 7 pm.

Divers should keep an eye on the board at their dive shop and schedule at least one night dive while on Curaçao. Fascinating by day, the marine world becomes magical after dark. Night diving is an exhilarating, and even other-worldly experience that should not be missed.

*Thursday is Ladies' Night at Rum Runners.*

Culture buffs may want to check the local paper or the concierge or activities desk at their hotel to see if there are any performances scheduled. Dance troupes, musicians and theater groups often stop in Curaçao when travelling between Europe and the Americas. Performances are often held at the International Trade Center.

Next on the agenda is dinner at one of Curaçao's world-class restaurants. Then it's up to you. Pub crawlers may want to check out the action at **Rum Runners** and **Carlito's Cantina**, next door to the Hotel Porto Paseo on De Rouvilleweg in Otrobanda. If it's after 10 pm and you're looking for a nightclub or disco where you can burn off those extra calories dancing to the best American and Latin music, hop in the car or grab a cab to **Salinja**, where you'll find the island's

hottest clubs. Many offer live entertainment on Wednesday (Ladies Night), as well as on the weekends when they stay open till 3 am. Closing time during the week is 2 am. Cover charge and entertainment vary by night, so it's best to call ahead. Local bands to watch for include Doble R, Gibi y Su Orquesta, the Mambo Kings and ERA.

A young crowd gathers at **The Pub** ( 61290), which features a lot of North American music mixed in with fast-paced merengue and salsa. The more glitzy **Facade** ( 614640) and **L'Aristocrat** ( 614353) – popularly called L.A. – both attract a slightly older, more upscale clientele and play classic as well as contemporary Latin music with some North American dance music mixed in. The activity desk at your hotel should be able to provide you with a Tourist Courtesy Card for L.A. Even if you've never attempted a salsa or merengue before coming to Curaçao, don't be shy. Just move your hips and you'll soon merengue with the best.

For a special night under the stars, there's live music on the terrace at **Landhuis Brievengat** on Friday nights starting at 9 pm and again on Sundays starting at 6 pm. As a warm-up to Friday's festivities, the Landhuis holds a dance class on Thursday evenings from 8:30 to 9:30 pm.

If you prefer the bells and whistles of the slots and the thrill of the gaming tables to the dance floor, head to a casino. Chances are there is one in your hotel. But since each is a

little different, why not check out some of the others. If it's elegance you're after, the Emerald Casino at the Sonesta Resort should be your first choice. Slot machines of all types are wall-to-wall at the Princess Beach, where an entire room is devoted to those "one arm bandits." The Princess Beach doesn't lack for gaming tables either. If you opt for one of the casinos in town such as the Van Der Valk Plaza or Porto Paseo casinos, you can combine gambling with a moonlight stroll across the Emma Bridge and a night cap at the Waterfort Arches.

If you'd be more content with a low-key evening, relax under the stars at an outdoor table along the Waterfort Arches or in a sidewalk café in Punda. **Hard Rock Society** on Keuken Plein and **El Patio** at Santa Rosaweg 155 are open till 1 am. A chaise by the pool or on the beach at your hotel may not be a bad idea either. But don't make it a habit. Curaçao is an island to experience, both day and night!

## Curaçao A-Z

**AIRLINES:** To call **American Airlines**, 687008 or 695707; **United Airlines** can be reached at 613033 or 695533. The local number for **British Airways** is 617187. To reach **Lufthansa**, 657799. For reservations or confirmations on **Air Aruba** 683777 or 683559. **ALM** can be reached at 695533 and **KLM** at 652747. The local number for **Servivensa** is 680500 or 680538. Be sure to confirm your flight at least 24 hours in

advance. The general number for the **Curaçao International Airport** is 681719.

**AIRPORT TAX:** There is a $10 U.S. departure tax for international flights. The tax for inter-island flights is $5.65 U.S.

**BANKING:** Banks are open Monday through Friday from 8 am to 3:30 pm. The bank at the airport is open from 8 am to 8 pm, Monday through Saturday, and from 9 am to 8 pm on Sunday. U.S. dollars are accepted virtually everywhere on the island.

**BABYSITTING:** Most hotels will arrange for a babysitter, often a member of the staff, if you request one. The Sonesta and Princess Beach Hotels have children's programs.

**CREDIT CARDS**: American Express, Visa/Mastercard and Diners Club are the most widely accepted. The American Express representative is **S.E.L. Maduro & Sons,** Breedesstraat 3B in Willemstad ( 616212). Services include personal and travellers check cashing and reporting lost or stolen cards. **Maduro & Curiel's Bank N.V.,** with its head office on the Plaza Jojo Correa in Willemstad ( 661100/fax 661444) is the Visa/MasterCard representative. They also have 12 ATM machines across the island through which you can access your account at home using a Cirrus bankcard or get a cash advance with your Visa/MasterCard.

**DEPARTURE TAX:** If you are flying to Curaçao or any of the other islands of the Netherlands Antilles you must pay a departure tax of $5.75 U.S. or NAFL 10. The departure tax for international flights, including Aruba, is $10 U.S. or NAFL 17.50.

**DRINKING WATER:** Curaçao boasts that it has the best tasting drinking water in the world. It's distilled sea water produced on Piscadera Baai in the world's largest desalination plant. Not only is it delicious plain, it's also used to produce Amstel, the beer of the Netherlands Antilles, and Curaçao Liqueur.

**ELECTRICITY:** Curaçao operates on 110-130 VAC (50 cycles), and is compatible with small appliances designed for use in the United States. Much of the island's electricity is generated by the desalination plant. Adaptors may be necessary in some places.

**EMERGENCIES:** To call an **ambulance**, 112. For the **police** or **fire department**, 114. To contact the hospital, 624900.

**ISLAND TOURS: Curaçao Sightseeing Tours**, a division of **ShorEx International**, offers wonderful tours of Willemstad and the countryside, including a tour of historic Willemstad by trolley. The activities desk at your hotel should be able to provide you with a schedule and additional information. For a less conventional perspective of the island, the non-profit **Unique Curaçao Foundation** will show you the other side of Curaçao. Attractions include Voodoo Caves, the Under-

ground Lake of Shingot, the Watamula Crater and much more. Customized jeep tours and helicopter rides can be arranged. For information, 628989.

**NEWSPAPERS & BROADCAST MEDIA:** English language dailies include the *Dutch Caribbean Gazette* and *Curaçao Today*. Both cover international as well as local news. The news is given in English several times daily on Transworld Radio at 800 on the AM dial and on Radio Paradise 103.1 FM. CNN headlines are announced every half-hour from 10 pm to 2 pm the following day on Semiya FM at 98.7 FM. Most hotels have satellite television and carry CNN and other English language programming, as well as stations from Venezuela.

**SHOPPING HOURS:** Stores are open from 8 am to noon and 2 pm to 6 pm, Monday through Saturday. Certain stores will open on Sundays and holidays, except Christmas and Good Friday, when cruise ships are in port. For more information, 611455.

**TELEPHONE:** Curaçao's area code and country code is **599-9**. For AT&T USA Direct Service, 001-800-872-2881.

Curaçao has a modern phone system and you should have no problem making local or international calls. 125 for the international operator.

**TOURIST OFFIC**E: The main office of the Tourist Board is at Pietermaii #19 in

Willemstad ( 616000). There is also a kiosk by the exits in the airport and at the cruise ship terminal in Otrobanda. In the United States, 1-800/332-8266 (in New York 1-212/683-7660) or write: Curaçao Tourist Board, 475 Park Avenue South, Suite 2000, New York, NY 10016 or 330 Biscayne Blvd., Miami FL 33132 ( 305/374-5811). In the Netherlands, contact Mr. Guillermo Neef, Vasteland 82-84, 3011 BP, Rotterdam ( 31-10-4142639).

**BUSINESS & INVESTOR INFORMATION:** If you're interested in business and/or investment opportunities in Curaçao, contact any of the following:

**Chamber of Commerce:** Kaya Junior Salas 1, 611455/fax 615652.
**Curaçao Convention Bureau:** International Trade Center, 624433/fax 624408.
**Curaçao Industrial & International Trade Development Co. (CURINDE):** Emancipatie Boulevard #7, 376000.
**Curaçao Inc.:** International Trade Center, 636250/fax 636485.
**Foreign Investment Agency Curaçao (FIAC):** Scharlooweg #174, 657044/fax 615787.
**Trade & Industry Association:** Kaya Junior Salas, 611210.